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[SEATED IN FRONT OF A LOW STAND, MADELINE HANDED GODFREY HIS TURN.]

THE HEIRESS OF DEEPDENE.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VERDICT.

"Well!" breathed Madeline, taking a step forward, and then standing still in the middle of the room, unable to advance farther.

"My dear," Katie said, with unusual gentleness, pressing the young girl's hands in both of hers, "he is free—you have saved him!"

Madeline turned away her head, so as to hide the sudden gush of happy tears that had come into her eyes, and a prayer of thankfulness went up from her inmost heart.

Katie led her to a couch, and sat down beside her, and for a few minutes neither spoke.

"Tell me all about it!" Madeline said, at length, not noticing the thoughtfulness that clouded Mrs. Treherne's bright blue eyes.

"How is it the inquiry is so soon over?"

"Because there was so little evidence

brought forward on either side. First of all, Fenn asked for a remand, in order to enable him to find Ellen Chalmers, the poor dead man's daughter; but to this the magistrates would not agree, and so the case was proceeded with. Most of the evidence was the same as that given at the inquest, the only additional witness being one brought forward by the police to prove that Godfrey and Chalmers were at enmity with each other, and that Chalmers had sworn to have Captain Vane's life."

"But what caused their enmity?" asked Madeline, interrupting.

"Something that happened before you went to Deepdene—for, as you are aware, Chalmers formerly worked on Sir Richard Vane's estates, and that was how Godfrey came to know him."

"Your answer is a little vague, Katie!" observed Madeline, looking at her keenly—a look under which Mrs. Treherne's eyes dropped uneasily.

"Yes! I know it is," she avowed, with candour, "and, what is more, I don't wish you to ask me to make it plainer."

"Why not?"

"Because it might render you unhappy, when there is no necessity for you to be. It is a sad tale, that is now over and done with, and the best plan is to forget it as soon as possible. Let me go on with my history of the inquiry. Trefasius was splendid—his speech was wonderfully eloquent and telling, and he made the most both of the finding of the ticket, and the fact of the strange woman's presence in the Wood. But the point that created the greatest impression was the hole in his coat-sleeve, and the grazing of Godfrey's arm by the gunshot. After Trefasius had finished speaking he called the prison-doctor, who testified to the mark on the skin, and then Garlick proved finding the ticket, and the Crawley porter, and one or two other people who had seen the veiled lady, as she was called, gave their evidence.

It did not amount to much, still Trefasius made it appear a good deal by his skilful examination, and no one was surprised when Godfrey was released, as the magistrates all agreed there was not sufficient evidence to send the case for trial. I hurried home

directly, in order to be the first to bring you the good news!"

"And where is Captain Vane?" queried Madeline, in a very low voice.

"With that horrid step-sister of his. She was in court all the time, and when the verdict was given she must needs go into hysterics, so she was taken to her lodgings, and Godfrey was sent for by the doctor who attended her. It seems she was screaming out that she must and would see him, so he had no alternative but to go. He told me to tell you he would be here as soon as he possibly could, so you may expect him at any minute now."

Katie dared not look into Madeline's face as she said this; and almost immediately afterwards she left the room, while our heroine still sat with clasped hands and downcast eyes, trying to still the pulsations of her rapidly beating heart.

Up to now her mind had been so full of Godfrey's peril that she had not even given a thought to what must follow in the event of his acquittal. How could she meet him—unloved wife, unwedded bride, as she was? Would it not be better to deny herself to him altogether, and leave Bracondale before even he had entered it?

A dozen wild projects surged through her brain, from which she was aroused by the utterance of her own name.

"Madeline!"

She looked up hastily, and there, on the threshold, stood Godfrey himself!

He was very pale, and it seemed to her that even the few days that had passed since the last saw him had made him look older and graver. There was a curious twitching about his lips, which if she had known him better, she would have attributed to its right cause—emotion. And indeed, Godfrey was so overcome by a tumult of varied feelings that his very efforts at self-repression lent his face a certain sternness which struck Madeline with a sudden chill, and choked back the greeting she would have given him.

She rose quickly from her seat, while he crossed over to her, and took her hand. It was icy cold, and it lay in his like a piece of carved marble. If, by chance, his fingers had touched her wrist, he would have felt how rapidly the blood was pulsing through the delicate blue veins, and how hard it was for her to keep up this mask of calm indifference; then perhaps—who knows?—the course of both lives might have been different!

"Have you no word to say to me?" he asked at last, grievously disappointed at her silence, and thinking to himself how fair and sweet she looked as she stood before him, with the long velvet darkness of her lashes sweeping her cheek, and all the colour in her face centring in the mobile lips.

"I—I am very glad you are free!" she faltered at last, without however, raising her eyes, and gently withdrawing her hand as she spoke.

"Is that all? Well, I suppose I have no right to expect more!" But he sighed, and Madeline felt, though she did not see, his gaze upon her.

The pulsation of her heart grew wilder. She feared lest he should notice how rapidly the little pearl brooch that fastened her collar rose and fell, but, to her surprise, he turned away, and walked towards the window, where he stood for some minutes, his back towards her, trying to subdue the agitation that had taken possession of him.

Before he found himself in her presence he had schooled himself as to what he should say to her. He had even prepared a little speech, in which to tell her how grateful he was for what she had done for him, and how his whole life should be devoted to the payments of his debts. But now a passion stronger than himself drove the words from his lips—a passion against which, at first, he had struggled, but which, even against his will, had dominated him with a supreme power.

It was not until the night of Luke Chalmers'

death that a knowledge of the truth had come to him, and then it had betrayed itself in the glad exultation that had leapt into life when Katie Treherne had spoken of the marriage—for that the suggestion had originated with Madeline herself he did not doubt. Then, for the first time, he confessed to himself that he loved her—not with a boy's youthful fancy, but with the deeper, more fervent passion of a man, and his readiness to fall in with the suggestion had been due to this fact, as well as to the hope that had, at the same moment, sprung into being. Surely Madeline loved him, otherwise not even his peril could have induced her to consent to marrying him!

It was this hope that had buoyed him up during those dark days when the future had loomed with such miserable uncertainty before him. It was this hope that had been in his heart when he stood before her, and uttered her name a few minutes ago.

But the hope had grown suddenly fainter. Her silence, her averted gaze, the marble pallor of her face—all these were so different to his dreams.

Surely he had not made a fool's paradise for himself! If so, it was time the awakening should come!

He came back to her, and seated himself beside her on the couch.

"Madeline!" he said, abruptly, "you have behaved with a nobleness and generosity that no woman has ever equalled, and any conventional words of thanks seem hopelessly inadequate to express one-half of what I feel."

"Hush!" she exclaimed, in a choked kind of voice, and making a swift gesture of negation. "If you really wish to please me you will never refer to it again after to-day—never, never, never! Consider it in the light of reparation for a wrong of which I was the innocent cause. That is all!"

"Is it indeed all?" he exclaimed, hoarsely; and once more he caught her hand, and held it firmly in his. "Was that your motive for marrying me?—that, and none other?"

He bent down, and looked eagerly, anxiously into her face, his breath stirring the locks of hair that lay on her temples.

Never in her life had Madeline struggled so hard for calmness. A horrible fear had come to her. Was it possible he suspected that love vision she had dreamed at Deepdene, in the old days, when his portrait had smiled down on her from its gilded frame, and she had lingered to look into the blue eyes, and weave her girlish fancies round her pictured hero?

Did he think she had given her love unsought—this unwedded bride of his?

To Madeline's proud, sensitive nature the idea was maddening. Better anything than that he should suspect the truth!

By a supreme effort she conquered her agitation, and the face she turned to him was calm, in spite of its deadly pallor.

"That was my motive, and none other," she repeated. "What other motive should there be? Ever since your uncle's death gave me the fortune that I felt should have been yours, my one idea has been to atone for the wrong; and when Katie Treherne told me that the only way in which I could prevent myself from being forced to tell those last words of Luke Chalmers was by marrying you—I consented."

"Katie Treherne told you!" he echoed, under his breath. "Great Heaven! It was she, then, who thought of this desperate remedy?"

This time Madeline's large clear eyes looked into his surprisedly.

"She! No! It was yourself surely!"

There was no doubting her voice and tone, and in a moment the whole thing became clear to Godfrey. They had both been the victims of Mrs. Treherne's diplomacy!

It is to be feared that something that was not a blessing was invoked by Godfrey on his old friend's wife. Katie had meant well, no doubt, and her plan had succeeded; but

what a price would have to be paid for that success!

For the first few minutes the young man was perfectly stunned, and unable to speak; then he felt that the least he could do was to let Madeline continue in her error, and he said, quietly,—

"I think we must all have been mad that night. I must, at any rate, or I should never have consented to your sacrificing yourself as you did. However," as he observed how she winced, "we need not talk of that now. The question we have to think of is the future."

"Can't things go on in the future just as they did before—before the ceremony took place?" she asked, hastily. "It need not make any difference to us. You can go your way, and I will go mine."

She did not conclude her sentence, for, in spite of himself, Godfrey smiled at the innocence, even childishness, of the words, and for the first time it struck him how lonely, and unprotected, and girlish she was—y younger even than her years in many respects.

If the marriage had done no other good, it had at least given him the right to protect her, and he resolved that nothing should deprive him of the right. Surely he might teach her to love him in the future—by patient waiting and unremitting endeavour!

"No," he answered, gently. "Things cannot go on as they did before, Madeline. You are my wife, remember, and a marriage is a marriage—for better for worse, till the end comes! Heaven knows I would, if I could, undo the past! But as that is impossible, we must do what we can with the future. But, before we go any further, let me make a confession—it is one I owe you. Whatever of blame I may have thought attached to you concerning Uncle Richard's will, I now know existed only in my imagination. Of your purity and goodness, and disinterestedness, I have no doubt. Will you forgive me for any hard thought I may have cherished when I heard the will read?"

"You have no need to ask my forgiveness," she faltered. "Hard thoughts were quite natural under the circumstances."

"Then, in token of confidence and friendship, put your hand in mine, and say, 'Godfrey, I trust you!'"

She did as he commanded, and he raised the delicate little hand to his lips.

"Now, it is plainer calling," he said, his fingers closing firmly round hers. "Remember, whatever happens, we are friends. To the outside world we are husband and wife, but in effect we will be brother and sister. It shall be my happiness to do all I can to promote yours, and your life will at least be less lonely than it used to be."

"Do you mean, then, that I am not to go back to Deepdene?" she asked, humbly, willing enough to trust to his guidance on these terms.

"Not unless you wish it very much. Recollect winter is coming on, and Deepdene is at its worst in the late autumn. Besides, you have no friends there, and the associations of the place can't be pleasant just now. I thought I would take you to London, where you could see fresh sights, and go about a little more than you have hitherto done. Shall you not like it?"

"I don't know. I have never been to London."

"Well, then, you can try it. As for myself, I will try to annoy you as little as I can with my presence, but I shall always be at hand if you want me; and, what is more, I shall be able to look after you, and see that you don't get dull and depressed, as you did at Deepdene."

"How did you know I got dull and depressed there?"

"Because Katie Treherne has told me so," he answered, smiling. "Ah! you are not aware how often she and I have talked of you!"

Then he was silent for a little while, but his fingers still clasped hers.

"Tell me if you don't quite agree to my plan?" he added, presently. "I am willing to modify or alter it if you wish."

But Madeline had nothing to suggest. In effect, she was too utterly dumbfounded to be able to collect her thoughts just yet, for it had never entered her head that they would live together.

Still, she supposed that Godfrey was naturally anxious to keep from the world any suspicion of the real facts of the case with regard to his marriage, and, therefore, it would be better for him that the same roof should shelter them.

In any case, she felt that the least she could do would be to yield to his wishes, especially when her own heart was full of a swift, subtle delight at the prospect of seeing him day by day, listening to his voice, trying to minister to his happiness.

"There is one thing I want to mention," she said, hesitatingly. "It is—the money. You will use it and think of it as your own!"

For a minute his brow clouded. Godfrey Vane was the last man in the world to depend on his wife's wealth, and even under the peculiar circumstances of the case his pride was touched at the idea.

Madeline, who was watching him earnestly, followed his thoughts, and her heart fell.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, impulsively, "you will surely be generous enough to do as I wish!"

His face cleared, she had touched the right chord.

"Very well," he said, "it shall be as you wish."

CHAPTER XVII.

BEGINNING AFRESH.

The next day husband and wife bade adieu to the Trehernes, and were driven to the station in the brougham—for it was a chilly morning, with just a suspicion of rain in the air.

As they drove off, Katie and Jack Treherne stood on the steps to watch them go, and the former, with great energy, tossed a basinful of rice and a couple of old slippers after the carriage.

Godfrey, who had put his head out of the window to wave a final adieu, came in for a goodly portion of the rice, which lodged in the short, crisp curls of his hair, and required a considerable amount of shaking before it could be finally got rid of.

"It wouldn't do to leave a single grain," he observed, laughing, "or we should attract attention all the way up, and everybody would recognise us as bride and bridegroom!"

Bride and bridegroom! How strangely the words fell on Madeline's ear, and how little like a bride she felt! Even yet she could hardly realise her position, or the fact that Godfrey Vane was, indeed, her husband.

At the station they had to wait some ten minutes or more, for the train was not yet signalled, and the porters looked at them with undisguised curiosity—for, needless to say, they were at once recognised, and the details of the Crawley Wood murder—as it was called—were still too fresh not to evoke a vivid interest.

"We will go into the waiting-room," said Godfrey, a shade of annoyance in his voice, and he drew Madeline's arm through his, and led her inside.

There a surprise awaited them. A man was standing at the window, looking out from behind the wire blind, and he turned as they entered, thus revealing the features of Dr. Earnshaw.

For a moment neither of the three moved, then he came forward and held out his hand to Madeline, speaking quietly, but with perfect self-possession.

"Let me wish you happiness, Madeline! Life is too short to keep up animosity, and

though I, as your guardian, had a right to expect to be consulted with regard to your marriage, yet as it is now a fact accomplished, the only thing for me to do is to accept it." Then he turned to Godfrey. "Shall we let bygones be bygones, Captain Vane, and start afresh?"

"With all my heart!" answered the soldier, who was the last person in the world to bear malice. All the same, he felt a curious thrill of repulsion as he met Earnshaw's dark eyes, for he had not yet forgotten the look that had been in them on the night of the marriage, when the baffled man had been doomed to see the hopes, in which he had put such faith, dashed to pieces before his eyes.

*No such doubt troubled Madeline. She was too unfeignedly glad to be at peace with all men not to respond immediately to Earnshaw's advances; for she quite recognised that he had a right to feel aggrieved, and she was inclined to credit him with a generous magnanimity for overlooking the way in which his claims as her guardian had been ignored.

"Are you going back to Deepdene?" she asked, timidly.

"Yes. I have been absent from my practice quite long enough. And you?"

"I am taking Madeline to London," said Godfrey, before she had time to speak. "I think it is better for her than Deepdene just now."

There was a slight contraction of Earnshaw's brows, but almost immediately they became clear again.

"No doubt you are right. Do you wish to live in Sir Richard Vane's house in Grosvenor-square? If so, I had better write to the agent, and authorise him to give up possession to you."

"Oh no! A great dreary mansion like that would be out of the question for us. Besides, our plans are not altogether matured. I am thinking of taking a small furnished house somewhere at Kensington until I see how Madeline likes town. For the first few days we shall be at the Grand Hotel."

A somewhat awkward silence ensued, and all were relieved when the train came puffing into the station.

As Madeline sank back against the cushions of the first-class compartment, which she and Godfrey had to themselves, she could not help thinking of the first time she had seen the station, on the arrival from Deepdene but a few short weeks ago. How much had happened in that time. How utterly and completely her life had changed!

The journey up to town was a quiet one. Madeline made a pretence of reading the papers and magazines with which Godfrey had supplied her, while he leaned back in his corner of the carriage, wrapped in thought, but occasionally stealing a glance at his companion's delicate profile, and the soft mist of curls that shaded her brow.

He was planning out his future action—resolving to surround her with such a halo of love and care and tenderness as could not fail to touch her, even while he would never permit himself even to look into the sweet eyes, or press her lips with a lover's caress, until such time as he should have won her heart.

Then, indeed, a golden future would open out for both of them, redeeming in its completeness all the sin and sorrow of the past!

Poor Godfrey! Not so easily could the Nemesis of Destiny be appeased!

To Madeline the first few days' existence in London were like the beginning of a new existence—for it must be remembered that all her life had been spent either in the strict seclusion of a foreign school or in the quietude of Deepdene, and this was so different to either that it took her some little time to get quite used to it.

The noise and bustle of London—its surging crowds and ever-deepening excitement—came upon her as a revelation, and Godfrey often smiled to see how contented she was to stand in front of the window of her sitting-room and gaze down at the seething throngs of humanity

that passed and repassed like the changing scenes of a panorama.

It was a pleasure to him to watch the gradual expanding of her nature, as some of the shyness and timidity with which she at first regarded him by degrees wore off.

Her character was such a curious compound of womanly tenderness and childish innocence, of sensitive pride, and single-hearted earnest simplicity, combined with a latent force which only required circumstances to develop, that even if she had been a stranger his interest would have deepened day by day, and he surely must have ended in loving her.

As it was, it became a hard task to hide from her the passion that each hour only served to intensify, and occasionally these very efforts lent a stern repression to his manner, whose meaning Madeline mistook for something very different.

Never once did she suspect the truth, and the trouble that weighed upon her most heavily was the fear that already Godfrey had begun to find her a burden, and to regret his hasty marriage of convenience.

Nevertheless, she was woman enough to find the search for their new house very delightful; and when, at last, one to suit them was discovered, it was more than delightful to choose the furniture for it.

"Why, you are quite an artist!" Godfrey said to her one day in admiration, as they were returning to the hotel after one of these shopping expeditions. "I had no idea you had such good taste!"

"Have I good taste?" she asked, with a charming blush, which her veil hid.

"I was afraid I should have no end of trouble in arranging colours, and all that sort of thing," continued Godfrey, "but I find I have distressed myself for nothing. You have taken all the responsibility off my shoulders. I think I shall wash my hands of the whole thing, and let you complete the rest."

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, involuntarily.

"I should not like that at all."

"Why not?"

"Because there is no pleasure in doing anything by oneself," she answered, simply.

His eyes softened as they rested on her sweet, flower-tinted face, and he drew her arm through his with the air of protection that he now habitually assumed towards her.

"Then you like me to be with you while you are choosing the furniture for our new home?" he asked, his voice not perhaps quite so steady as usual.

"Certainly. I should be afraid to trust my own judgment."

"And yet, as a rule, you are not timid."

"Am I not?"

"Do you yourself think you are?" he persisted.

"I am sure I don't know," she said, laughing. "I have never thought about it."

"What a confession for a lady to make in these days of introspection and self-analysis!" exclaimed Godfrey, gaily. "You are quite behind the age, Madeline."

"Perhaps I shall improve under the influence of London air," she answered, in the same tone.

"Improve! I sincerely hope not—in that respect, at least."

"That is unkind of you," she said, more soberly, but without raising her eyes. "You ought to rejoice at the prospect of my improving in any way."

"Shall I tell you why I do not? Because I think you are charming as you are, and I would not have you different."

The rosy colour flushed Madeline's cheeks like sunset radiance. If he had only known how sweet his praise was to her! It was as much as she could do to control her voice as she answered him.

"Why, I do believe you have paid me a compliment, Captain Vane!"—in spite of his request she had not yet brought herself to address him by his Christian name.

"Well, and what of that? Are compliments so very objectionable to you?"

"I don't know that they are objectionable, but they are at least rare. No one has ever paid me a compliment in my life, except," she added, with the truthfulness that was part of herself, "except Dr. Earnshaw."

Godfrey's eyes grew sombre, and his right hand clenched itself in a highly suggestive manner.

"And pray what right had he to pay you compliments I should like to know?" he exclaimed, hotly.

"Oh, you need not be angry," responded Madeline, smiling, with something that approached demure coquetry. "He never got any encouragement either from me or Sir Richard."

"I should think not, indeed! And yet," the young soldier added, after a moment's thoughtful pause, "he had great influence over my uncle. I never quite understood how he obtained it."

"Nor I either," frankly rejoined Madeline; and then the mention of Sir Richard's name recalled to her mind the incident of the sealed packet, placed in her hands by Mr. Walters, and she forthwith mentioned the circumstance to her husband for the first time.

Godfrey seemed greatly interested in the packet, and as she finished speaking asked her what it contained.

"I don't know," she replied, "for, somehow or other, I have mislaid it. After Mr. Walters left, I placed it in my pocket, intending to read it later on, when I was alone in my room; but I forgot it while changing my dress for dinner, and when I went up to bed I could not find it anywhere. I shook out the folds of the dress I had been wearing, thinking possibly it might have lodged in them; but it was not there, neither was it anywhere in my room. I told Mrs. Treherne about the matter in the morning, and she promised to have a search made when we were gone, and send me the envelope, if it should be found. But she says nothing about it in her letters, so I suppose the search has been in vain. I often wonder what the letter contained!"

Godfrey wondered too—little thinking how closely he himself was concerned with Sir Richard Vane's last legacy to his young ward!

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNFORTUNATE VISIT.

It was a red-letter day in Madeline's calendar—the one on which she took possession of her new house. For the first time in her life she really felt she had a home of her very own.

Deepdene had been delightful, and she had, during Sir Richard's lifetime, been very happy in it; but, after all, there was a difference between the home lent her by the Baronet's kindness and one to which she had a legitimate claim—one that was essentially hers.

And, indeed, the little Queen Anne House at Kensington was pretty enough to win the heart of any young bride.

That it was small was one of its recommendations, and Madeline had brought together a wonderful collection of pretty things in the tiny drawing-room—Japanese screens gorgeously embroidered, Persian rugs of soft, faded tones, big stands of palms, whose large green fans lent an air of tropical splendour to their vicinity, pretty etchings, and countless other dainty trifles with which women love to surround themselves.

Then the first tea which she and Godfrey had together! It was a chilly October afternoon, and outside the fog and slush were abominable; but both were shut out by rich, warm-hued curtains, and the pine log fire in the grate shone cheerily on the polished brass implements, that made the tiled hearth look so pretty.

Two or three lamps, carefully shaded, and a subdued light, in which all the dainty nick-

nacks looked their best; and Madeline herself, in a soft white cashmere tea gown, trimmed with lace, and delicate knots of mauve ribbon, seemed like the presiding genius of the place.

Seated in front of a low stand, on which was set a Moorish tray, she handed Godfrey his tea and bread-and-butter, with a pretty little air of housewifely soberness, that he found irresistibly bewitching.

"You look quite matronly!" he told her; "and as for me I never in my life felt so near becoming domesticated!"

Madeline laughed, and then put a question to whose answer she listened rather anxiously.

"Do you think you will like this as well as your old club life?"

"I don't think anything about it. I am sure!"

"Oh! I am glad of that," she murmured, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid you might perhaps find it dull!"

"I haven't done so as yet."

"Well, considering this is your first day at home, I don't see how you can be said to have tested it," she retorted, laughing. "Did you see very much of your sister in those old days?"

"Of Keziah? Yes, I suppose I did. She used to kick up a row if I didn't contrive to call on her once a day, and so, for the sake of peace, I usually managed it."

"You have not seen her so often lately?"

"No. The fact of it is, some sort of a change has come over Keziah, and I can't quite understand it. Her temper never was very good, but now it is most consummately bad, and she visits it on me—which I think is very hard lines indeed. Ever since she returned from Brackendale she has taken up an aggrieved position, and has grown so silent and reserved that I can hardly recognise her. Poor old Keziah! After all, she has not a very lively time of it, cooped up in her dingy Bayswater lodgings, where she pinches and screws and scrapes in the vain hope of eking thirteen-pence out of a shilling!"

"She is poor, then?"

"Poor as a church mouse."

Madeline was silent for a few minutes, then she said, hesitatingly,—

"Couldn't we help her somehow?"

Godfrey shook his head, and held out his cup for some more tea.

"I'm afraid not. She has a curious sort of pride which would not let her accept anything from—you," he was about to say; but he pulled himself up short, and covered the pause by stroking the soft silky fur of a Persian kitten he had bought for his wife.

Madeline changed the subject, hoping that time would soften Miss Byrne's prejudices, and fully expecting that ere long Keziah would call and see her brother's new house. But in this idea she was mistaken, for the days and weeks passed by, and still no visitor crossed the threshold of the Queen Anne Villa.

This sometimes struck Madeline as strange—not that she felt dull, or anything approaching it, but it seemed odd that none of Godfrey's friends should call to see him. She supposed, however, that as he was so much at home he did not see them often outside, and so his old intimacies were dropped. Once she spoke to him on the subject, but he appeared curiously embarrassed, and made some evasive reply, which, somehow, caused his wife to fancy that the point was rather a sore one.

But these first few weeks of her married life were certainly the happiest our heroine had spent for a long time. Not that certain doubts and fears did not often attack her, but she did her utmost to put them away, and yield herself wholly to the joy of the present moment. Once she had asked her husband if anything fresh had been discovered concerning Luke Chalmers' death; but he had replied with a hasty negative, and she afterwards carefully avoided the subject, seeing that it pained him even to have it alluded to.

Although Godfrey kept to his resolve of not

in any way forcing his society upon her they still saw a good deal of each other; for unless he was taking her to a concert or theatre, his evenings were spent at home, and Madeline grew to look upon those quiet hours between dinner, and the moment when the stroke of eleven gave them warning to say good-night, as by far the happiest part of the day.

"Your club will miss you?" she observed to him, on one of these evenings. "You are never there now."

He looked up from his magazine.

"No—I have ceased to belong to my club."

Madeline repeated the words in astonishment, but vouchsafed no further comment, and seemed silent and preoccupied during the rest of the evening.

It was about six weeks after she had taken possession of the house that Madeline formed the resolve of going to see Keziah Byrne; for the fear that she had come between the brother and sister had been worrying her for a long time, and though she had every reason for disliking Miss Byrne, she determined to put personal feelings on one side in her endeavour to effect a reconciliation.

It was about four o'clock on a dim December afternoon that she found herself in the lodgings Godfrey had correctly described as "dingy."

Dingy they most certainly were, not to say dirty. The carpet—originally a common Brussels—was worn threadbare and colourless, the chairs and sofa were horsehair-covered, and of the most sternly uncompromising shape—no ease could the unhappy wight expect who should repose his limbs on that shiny black surface! There were one or two cheap German engravings on the walls, and over the mantelpiece was a looking-glass, wreathed round with festoons of old green paper—fly, blown in summer and grimy in winter!

At a table close to the handful of fire, Keziah Byrne was sitting, her dress carefully turned back over her knees, so that the flames should not take the colour out of it, and a grey knitted "crossover" on her shoulders. She looked strangely old and haggard, and forlorn, and her face certainly did not brighten as she saw who her visitor was.

"May I come in?" timidly asked Madeline, pausing on the threshold, and rather uncertain, from the expression on her hostess's face, whether she would be permitted to advance.

"As far as I can see, you are in!" was the ungracious reply. "If you mean, may you sit down, why, here's a chair, and you had better take it while you tell me what has brought you here."

Madeline availed herself of this permission, and placed on the table a pretty basket of grapes and delicate exotics she had brought with her—perhaps as a peace offering. Miss Byrne, however, promptly pushed the basket to the other extremity of the table, remarking that "the sickly smell of that stephanotis made her feel faint!" And then, clasping her hands in her lap and looking at Madeline in an inquiring attitude, she waited for her to speak.

"I have come to invite you to visit me," began the young girl, a trifle awkwardly—rendered nervous by the steady gaze of the hard, grey eyes opposite. "Godfrey—Captain Vane—and I should both be very pleased to see you."

"Did he send you here to say so?" snapped Miss Keziah. "Because if he did, I don't believe him!"

"No! I came on my own responsibility. Still, I am quite sure I am only stating his wishes."

Miss Byrne leaned forward a little. Her steely eyes did not soften, but the thin, bloodless lips were twitching convulsively.

"You are doing nothing of the sort, Mrs. Godfrey Vane, and you know it! If my brother is so anxious to see me, why doesn't he come here as he used to before he was married? Kensington and Bayswater are not so far apart; and, even if they were, he could

afford to pay for a cab now that he has a rich wife!"

The colour rushed in a deep flood to Madeline's cheeks, and she half rose from her chair; but after a moment's thought she re-seated herself, determined not to accept defeat if she could possibly help it.

Miss Byrne half divined her thoughts, and laughed satirically.—

"What! You don't like to have it hinted that you were married for your money? Well, I don't suppose the idea is pleasant, but neither are a good many other things that we have to put up with in this world—Godfrey's neglect of me, for example. I have been a good sister to him, and yet no sooner is he married than he throws me over like an old shoe!"

This accusation against Godfrey was not a just one, for, whatever his failings might be, ingratitude did not rank amongst them, and it was entirely Keziah's own fault that he had discontinued his visits to her.

As a matter of fact, her jealousy of Madeline was so great as to amount to absolute hatred, and she had not even the good taste to keep her sentiments to herself in the presence of Madeline's husband.

The young man's stern declaration that he would not listen to a word against his wife had only added fuel to the fire, and Keziah had broken out into a violent tirade which had ended in her half-brother's leaving the house, with a promise of not entering it again until she could learn to bridle her tongue.

All this she, with the utter unreason of an angry woman, laid to the charge of Madeline; and the sight of the girl this afternoon, with her delicate beauty, and her rich velvets and furs—for Godfrey insisted on her attiring herself in the prettiest and most expensive garments—had been gall and wormwood to the woman who possessed neither youth, beauty, nor riches.

Keziah's dream had always been that at Sir Richard Vane's death, and when Godfrey came into the estates, she would live with him, keep his house, and share his fortune. That designing women would endeavour to entangle him in the toils of matrimony she had been quite prepared for, but she had been equally determined to frustrate their unprincipled endeavours! And lo! the very girl, whom of all others she most disliked, had stepped into the place, on whose advantages she herself had so assuredly counted!

All Madeline's gentleness and evident desire to appease her husband's half-sister were, in Keziah's eyes, only so many points against her. Our heroine had not understood half the difficulties of her task when she undertook it, or perhaps she might have hesitated before trusting herself in the vicinity of Miss Keziah Byrne!

"Godfrey has no desire to throw you over," said the young girl, answering the latter half of Miss Byrne's speech, and ignoring the insult to herself. "If he has not been to see you quite so often lately, it is no doubt because he has been very much engaged."

"Engaged in doing what? Dangling attendance on you, I suppose; for, according to what I hear, he rarely stirs out of the house?"

A pretty colour spread itself over Madeline's face, and, try as she would, she could not prevent the loveliest shining in her eyes. Yes, Godfrey had certainly spent the greater part of his time at home, and a new and delicious hope was springing up in the young girl's breast, partly in consequence.

That blush of hers was unfortunate, for Keziah was quick enough to read what it meant, and it stirred her jealousy into a flame.

"You need not think that it was for the sake of your white face and airs and graces that he gives you the pleasure of his company!" she sneered, her own face growing very grey. "Shall I tell you the reason? It is simply because his old friends won't have anything to do with him. They have sent him to Coventry—everyone, and the reason is, the story of his marriage has leaked out, in

spite of all the precautions he has taken to keep it secret."

Madeline rose to her feet, her eyes sparkling with an indignant anger, before which Miss Keziah drew back.

"You have spoken untruly!" she exclaimed. "Even if the secret of his marriage has leaked out, as you call it, there is nothing disgraceful in it—nothing that could induce any man to withdraw his friendship from my husband! I do not believe what you have said!"

Miss Byrne shrugged her shoulders with an affectation of carelessness.

"You may believe it or disbelieve it, as you think fit, but the fact remains the same. Why, he has even been compelled to send in his resignation at his club, and that speaks for itself!"

A sudden fear fell upon Madeline, for she remembered how quiet Godfrey had been after telling her he had ceased to belong to a club, and for the first time a suspicion that there might be some truth in Keziah's statement struck her.

She drew her furs closer about her shoulders, and walked to the door. Then she paused for a moment.

"I am sorry that my efforts at friendliness with you have come to nothing," she said, with the gentle dignity that was all her own. "Perhaps in the future I may be more fortunate."

She bowed, and would have left the room, but that Keziah called her back.

"Wait a minute, Mrs. Godfrey Vane. As you are here, it is just as well we should understand each other, and I make no apologies for speaking out what is in my mind. Friendship between me and you is an impossibility, both now and in the future, so you may spare your pains. If my brother wants to see me he must come here. I shall not humble myself by going to him."

Madeline's eyes were very bright, and her classic head was held very upright as she left the house, and got into the brougham that was in waiting for her. Although she had prepared herself for a cold reception, she had never dreamed that she would be openly insulted, and her heart would have been full of wounded pride if she had not been distracted with doubt on Godfrey's behalf. Was Keziah's accusation indeed true, and had he been forced to send in his resignation to his club?

At the corner of Westbourne-grove there was a block of carriages, and Madeline found herself gazing idly and half unseeing out of the brougham window. All in a minute she was conscious of a great shock, and she leaned eagerly forward to look at a gentleman on the opposite pavement, who was in the act of hailing a cab. On his left arm leaned a lady closely veiled, but whose tall, slight figure proclaimed her to be young, and elegantly dressed.

Godfrey assisted her into the hansom, then jumped in himself, and gave some directions to the driver, while poor Madeline fell back against the cushions of the carriage, white and trembling, and with the pang of a fierce pain whose meaning she did not at first recognise as jealousy!

(To be continued.)

A BROUGHAM built by an English firm is a model of conveniences. It is fitted with electric light sufficient for reading or writing. Opposite the sea is an ivory plate on which are several buttons properly lettered "Left," "Right," "Stop," "Go On," "Home," and so on. On the dashboard, in the coachman's view, is a case lettered to correspond, so that when a knob is pressed he understands at once what is expected of him. One button brings out the word "Speak," in which case he will put the speaking tube in position and receive orders.

THE BELLE OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—(continued.)

LORD ROSENBURY'S greetings to Lady Rosenbury, as well as her guest, were most respectful and deferential, and his manner was very quiet and gentlemanly as he seated himself and endeavoured to open a conversation, yet his presence was felt by both ladies as a restraint.

"There seems to be quite an excitement about Walter Lorraine's new picture," he observed, at length, when he had become convinced that Lorraine's plans had prospered, and that the artist would not trouble him again. "His studio is fairly besieged every day. I hear that he has left town—"

"Left town!" said Lady Rosenbury. "You have been misinformed, Raymond. He has an appointment with me for this evening!"

"Perhaps I may have been misinformed," replied Rosenbury, with pretended indifference. "If he is not gone he will of course call upon you. He is a very punctual man, I remember. I simply mentioned a rumour I happened to hear, but which certainly is too discreditable not to have some truth in it!"

"A discreditable rumour about him!" said Lady Geraldine, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes. "I do not understand you, Lord Rosenbury!"

"Be so kind as to explain yourself, Raymond," said Lady Rosenbury, with some sternness of manner.

"I fear I have already said too much—"

"You have said too much or too little, Raymond," responded her ladyship. "As Walter's friend, I demand an explanation!"

Rosenbury shrugged his shoulders, and answered,—

"I certainly spoke very thoughtlessly when I alluded to the silly rumour which I heard to-day. Of course, you ladies know better, but it was to the effect that he had eloped to Scotland with a young heiress who has long been infatuated with him!"

"You may well call such a rumour 'silly,'" remarked her ladyship, smiling. "Be so good as to deny it should you hear it again!"

Rosenbury bowed, and glanced at Geraldine.

He saw that the shaft he had deemed so clever, and which he had intended to arouse her to the deepest indignation against the artist, had entirely failed of its mark. Her cheeks were no paler than usual, and there was actually an amused smile upon her lips, as if his invention seemed to her the very height of absurdity.

She spent the evening with her friend, but at length announced that she must take her departure. Rosenbury left the room, evidently with the intention of preparing himself to accompany her, and her ladyship rang the bell, giving an order to a servant. She then said,—

"I do not understand, dear Geraldine, the reason of Walter's absence this evening, but of course he has some good reason."

"I fear he is ill!" returned Geraldine, with tearful eyes. "Oh, if he should be very ill in his lonely rooms, with no one but his valet to attend upon him!"

"He was very well last night, dear!" answered Lady Rosenbury, soothingly. "He is very healthy and vigorous, and I cannot think he is ill!"

"He must be!" Geraldine persisted, "else he would have kept his appointment. He would not allow business to come between us!"

"Do not give way to anxiety," said her ladyship, herself anxious and uneasy. "I will send to his studio the first thing in the morning to inquire about him. Should he call to-morrow to see you, I will send you a note by servant!"

Geraldine forced herself to be content with this decision, particularly as the hour was

late, and her fears of illness might after all be groundless. Lady Rosenbury was comforting her, when Raymond re-entered the apartment equipped for the street.

"I beg, Lady Geraldine," he said, "that you will allow me to escort you home!"

"I have already ordered the carriage for her," replied Lady Rosenbury, as the maiden hesitated. "Lady Geraldine and her maid will drive home!"

The maiden gave her friend a grateful look, and Rosenbury bit his lips in anger and chagrin. He was on the point of saying that the distance to be traversed was very short, and that the young lady had had no difficulty in walking it the previous evening with Walter Loraine; but he wisely restrained himself, bowed coldly, and endeavoured to conceal his disappointment.

The carriage was soon announced, and he escorted the guest to its very door, helping her in, and himself closed its portal behind her maid. He then sauntered off to his club.

On arriving home, the maiden retired to her own apartments to think and dream of her lover, whom her disturbed imagination pictured in trouble and danger.

The following day and evening were passed without a word from Lady Rosenbury or a line from Walter, and Geraldine's anxiety became positive alarm. She was inclined to repeat her visit to her friend, but a conviction that she would also meet Rosenbury himself kept her at home. She assured herself again and again that if he were ill he would let her know the fact; or, if he were unable to do so, Lady Rosenbury would communicate it. Not once did her mind recur to the silly fabrication of Raymond, and not once did she blame Walter for his silence, her confidence in his love and fidelity being unlimited.

The second morning brought the letter which Walter had been at such pains to post at Burleyford, but it never reached the hands of Lady Geraldine. It arrived at a later hour than Walter had expected, and was sent up with several other letters to the library. They were delivered to the Countess, who was sitting alone, having just come from the breakfast-room, where her husband yet lingered.

Her ladyship glanced over the missives, selected the one addressed to Lady Geraldine, paused to wonder at the post-mark and the pencilled superscription, and tore it open, deliberately reading its contents.

She had scarcely finished its perusal when she was startled by the sound of footsteps approaching the library-door, and she slipped the missive in her pocket just as the Earl entered.

"Well, Justina," he said, pleasantly, "you are busy writing acceptances of dinner invitations, I suppose? You ought to be happy now that you have compassed your desire to enter upon fashionable life, and have so soon become the object of so much attention."

"I am content," replied the Countess. "I have entered upon a busy yet idle existence that suits me very well after these dull, monotonous years at Milan. How people can live without gaiety I cannot imagine. I wonder at my old manner of living. But here are the letters," she added, pointing to the little pile before her. "And here," she concluded, "is a very singular letter from that artist to Geraldine. It appears that he is in the country somewhere, and has failed to keep an appointment with her at the house of a mutual friend. He expects to return to-day. Now, Egbert, who can this friend be of theirs who assists and encourages them to defy your lawful authority?"

"I am sure I don't know!" was the response.

"I believe it is Lady Rosenbury," declared the Countess. "Geraldine goes there oftener than elsewhere, and everybody says that her ladyship is remarkably devoted to the artist."

"Lady Rosenbury! Preposterous!" said the Earl. "Why, Geraldine has always been intimate with her ladyship, so her visiting

there often is no reason at all for implicating Lady Rosenbury in the matter. Besides, her ladyship is the mother of the favoured suitor—the one I favour—and she would never use her influence in behalf of a low-born painter, when by so doing she injures her own son. For once year astuteness is at fault, Justina. The oftener Geraldine visits at Rosenbury House the better I shall be pleased."

The Countess was silenced, but not convinced. In her very first interview with Lady Rosenbury she had felt her own inferiority to her noble visitor, and, on noticing the girl's love for her friend, her incipient jealousy had matured into a strong dislike.

She was too guarded to betray this feeling, however, and dismissed the subject, destroying the letter while the Earl perused his correspondence.

When he had finished his task, the wife produced a small collection of invitations and cards, and submitted them to him, demanding complete information in regard to the social position, &c., of the senders, and the Earl hastened to gratify her curiosity.

In the midst of their discussion the page appeared, bearing a card, which he delivered to his master. The latter glanced at it, turned pale, and said,—

"Show the gentleman in here!"

As the page disappeared the Earl turned to his wife and said, hurriedly,—

"My dear Justina, I have a business-call. Please retire. I wish to see the gentleman alone. Go quickly."

The Countess began to remonstrate, but her husband looked at her with an expression which compelled obedience, and she left the room by a door he indicated just as a man, with a hat slouched over his face, entered from the hall.

Her ladyship was unable to gain a view of his features, which seemed to be studiously concealed, and she lingered at the closed door of the inner room in the hope of hearing the conversation; but nothing reached her hearing save a quick, terrific cry, which was not repeated.

"A business call, and the Earl screaming like that!" she muttered, indignantly, as she retreated to her room in despair of overhearing anything. "Egbert has a secret from me, but I will fathom it if woman's wit is worth anything!"

She waited a long hour in her own room for the departure of the stranger, but the hall-door at last announced his going, and she then expected the page to summon her to the library. But he did not come, and she grew petulant at the Earl's neglect. The thought finally occurred to her that doubtless she was expected to return without a summons, and she made her way to the library.

The page came out as she went in, but without a glance at him she addressed herself to her husband,—

"Egbert, do you call this proper treatment—oh, whatever is the matter? Have you lost your senses?"

Her ladyship might well express astonishment, for the morning sunshine had been carefully secluded from the apartment, the windows were covered closely, and the magnificent lustre pendant from the ceiling was glittering with gaslight.

More singular than the transformation of the library was the change in the Earl himself. His portly person seemed shrunk to half its usual size, his complexion was livid. He was crouched in a large easy-chair in a shrinking, fearful attitude, and at the entrance of his wife he half-started up, with a look of wild alarm.

"Egbert, have you lost your senses?" repeated the Countess, wonderingly. "What mad freak is this? Why do you light the gas at twelve o'clock in the day? I never saw such a singular performance in my life!"

"Hush! Justina," said the Earl, feebly. "Don't make such a noise. I cannot hear if anyone comes!"

"Are you expecting some one?"

The Earl answered only by a frightened look, which irritated his wife extremely.

"I think," she said, "I'll turn off the gas and open the windows—"

"Don't!" cried the Earl, in a tone of abject entreaty. "I cannot have it done. Oh! go away, Justina. I want to be alone."

The Countess desisted from carrying out her expressed intention, but with mingled curiosity and alarm she asked,—

"Who was that man who was here just now, Egbert? You need not answer that he is a business agent, for I know that no affair of money could reduce you to such a state of complete prostration. What is your secret? You need not fear to tell your wife. Our interests are the same. If you fear and dread anything I ought to know all about it, since your danger is also mine."

The Countess spoke earnestly, and with some appearance of affection, but her words fell without weight, even if they were comprehended.

The Earl's face seemed to grow, if possible, more livid and ghastly, and his eyes gleamed from a purple circle with a fearful expression, and he glanced over his shoulders and at the door with strange apprehensiveness.

Her ladyship continued to urge her claims to his confidence, but the only reply she elicited was a shrill whisper to the following effect,—

"Don't speak so loud, Justina. Some one might hear you. Don't call my name, I beg of you. Oh! if you'd only go away."

"But my place is here," persisted the Countess. "I will send for the family physician. Your appearance frightens me."

The Earl instantly negatived her proposal to send for the physician, and cowered closer in his chair.

"Do you want your niece?" asked Justina, at a loss what to do.

"My niece, Geraldine?" whispered the Earl, looking around him. "Oh, my heart! my heart!"

He clasped his hands to his side and breathed gaspingly for a few moments, during which the Countess stood by him irresolute and frightened. She had heard of the Earl's malady and of the physician's opinion in regard to it, and she again proposed to send for the physician.

"No, no!" replied the Earl, recovering from his sudden pain. "I am well enough. Please go away, and send my page to me."

This being all he would allow her to do for him the Countess withdrew. The page was seated outside the door, pale and anxious, and hastily obeyed her direction to attend to his lordship. Her ladyship then, after some minutes' thought, proceeded to the apartment of Lady Geraldine to inform her of the Earl's singular illness, and learn if he were subject to frequent similar attacks.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

There's not a fibre in my trembling frame

That does not vibrate when thy step draws near! There's not a pulse that throbs not when I hear Thy voice, thy breathing, nay, thy very flame!

—F. K. Butler.

EARLY as was the hour of their arrival at London, Walter Loraine thought it best for many reasons to proceed immediately to his chambers with the fugitive. Ever thoughtful of others, he remembered that his valet must have suffered a great deal of anxiety on his account, and would rejoice at his return. Then, too, he half-expected to find a note from the Lady Geraldine at his studio, in response to the letter he had posted to her at Burleyford. In addition to these personal motives, he felt that the fugitive's unknown enemy might have spies everywhere on the look-out to capture him, and that his removal to his chambers must be as secret as possible. Until the poor gentleman's recovery not a person must suspect his whereabouts.

"You must not say anything to any one

about my sick friend here, father," said the artist, as Lorraine got out of his berth and proceeded to dress himself. "Do you think you can preserve a complete silence in regard to him?"

"Certainly, Wal'er," was the reply. "Most secret individ'al in 'xistence! Tell anything 'bout him—scorn do it! Got secrets m' own kept good many years—more'n like tell! Needn't tell poor old father who fren' is—all same me. Think now'll go on deck, see Jack. You don't know him as I do, Wal'er, he's uncommon f'l'a. He's got somethingsay t' me!"

Walter comprehended that the communication alluded to had reference to some morning stimulant, and he sighed as he realised how perfectly futile were all his efforts to reform his father.

"You know where I live, father," he said, "and I wish you would ask Jack to anchor as near to my home as possible. Then let him go ashore, find a cab, and bring it within reasonable distance. My friend is too ill to walk!"

"Better wait daylight, Wal'er—"

The artist negatived this proposition, and Lorraine rather unsteadily proceeded to the deck and gave Walter's orders to the seaman. This duty fulfilled he paid a visit to Jack's stores, soon returning from them with a beaming countenance and garrulous tongue.

In due time the sloop was anchored, and Jack went ashore to summon a cab, grumbling as he went that it would be impossible to find one at that early hour.

Fortunately for Walter's plan of complete secrecy in regard to him, the fugitive's ravings had almost entirely ceased, and he was comparatively quiet. His coat was put upon him, a hat placed on his head, and by the time of Jack's return he was ready for the removal.

"Found a cab, sir!" said the seaman, putting his head into the cabin. "It's a waiting, sir."

"Very well," responded Walter. "I shall need your assistance, Jack, in getting my friend ashore!"

Jack came forward to take his share of the burden, and Lorraine was very officious in his offers of assistance. Walter had some difficulty in getting the fugitive ashore and into a cab, notwithstanding the help given him, and he gave a sigh of relief when at length the task was accomplished.

"Go back sloop, Jack, m' good fren'," said Lorraine, extending his hand to him. "Comin' 'board 'a'elf in an hour. We shall meet 'gain, nev' fear!"

"Perhaps you had better go back with Jack now?" suggested Walter.

"No; wish see interestin' fren' home with you. Shall then 'turn. Jack's a genial soul—un'estan's me better'n you do, Wal'er!"

It was useless to attempt to dissuade Lorraine from accompanying the artist home, so Walter entered the cab, taking a seat beside the fugitive, and Lorraine was assisted to enter by the cabman.

The order was then given as to their destination, Lorraine waved his hand to the departing Jack, and the cab slowly proceeded on its way.

Walter took the head of the fugitive upon his breast, making the invalid's position as comfortable as possible, and the latter made no complaint, not even resuming his ravings, during the drive.

Arrived at Walter's studio the cab stopped, and the artist noticed a light gleaming from his windows. He comprehended that his valet was keeping a constant watch for his return, and that he should encounter no difficulty in carrying out his design of secrecy.

Springing from the cab, he unlocked the hall-door with his latchkey, and returned to assist the cabman to carry his friend up to his rooms. This was finally accomplished, Lorraine following them, and they paused at the door of the ante-chamber, which was locked. Walter's knock brought the valet to the door, and Parkin's first glance fell upon the form carried by the artist and his employé.

"Oh, my poor master!" he cried. "I expected it—I knew that he was killed! Oh—"

"Hush, Parkin, here I am, alive and well!" responded Walter, in his usual cheery tones. "I have brought a sick friend home with me—that's all!"

The valet uttered a cry of joy, and stood aside as the fugitive was laid upon a couch.

Walter then paid the cabman a liberal fee, dismissing him, but that individual remarked,—

"You see, sir, it was quite by accident I happened to be in the neighbourhood o' your yacht, an' you might a had no conveyance home. 'Sides, it's usual to pay more when a party's been on a lark!"

The artist saw that the fugitive was supposed to be a member of the party who had become intoxicated. Lorraine's condition favouring the idea, and willing to leave that impression, he doubled his fee to the cabman.

"Wait a minute, my good f'l'a," observed Lorraine, as the satisfied cabman turned to depart. "Want you take m' back. 'Bye, Wal'er. Goin' 'Morseful Petrel. See you t' morrow!"

He extended his hand to the artist, nodded to the valet, and withdrew, much to the artist's satisfaction.

"And so you thought I had come to grief, Parkin?" said Walter, when the outer door had closed behind Lorraine. "I have been out of town, and have but just returned. My friend here has a fever, and as soon as we can get him to bed I want you to go for a doctor."

Parkin assisted his master with alacrity, and it was not long before the invalid was placed in Walter's own bed, and a physician was in attendance.

"Do you think he will recover, doctor?" asked the artist, anxiously.

"Certainly. I think I can break up this fever within two or three days, or at the most a week. He needs unceasing care meanwhile. Give the medicines as I have directed. I will call in the morning!"

As soon as the physician had departed, Parkin entreated his master to lie down and sleep, and allow him to watch over his guest, declaring that he had done nothing but rest during his master's absence. Knowing Parkin to be a good nurse, Walter assented to the request; and, retiring to his studio, flung himself upon his couch, and fell into a slumber from which he did not awaken until late in the morning.

When he opened his eyes, the muslin curtains were swaying gently with the warm summer breeze that fluttered in through the open window; the carpet was flecked here and there with patches of sunlight; and the odour of fresh flowers filled the air. The artist was fond of flowers, and wondered a little at Parkin's thoughtful affection as he regarded the Sevres vases laden with a wealth of bloom and fragrance.

While he was admiring with an artist's eye the exquisite contrasts of the white camellias and crimson blossoms, looking like flashes of fire upon a bed of snow, his valet stole gently into the studio, and said in a low tone,—

"Are you awake, sir?"

"Yes, Parkin. But how extravagant you are in your rejoicings at my return to purchase hot-house flowers to brighten my studio! How many guineas did your bouquets cost?"

"Oh, I didn't buy them, sir," responded Parkin, in a tone that evidenced his regret at the fact. "They were sent to you, sir, about an hour ago, with a note. Here it is, sir!" and he extended a dainty missive. "Lady Rosebury's servant brought them, and he came the day after you left with a note which I put in your letter-vase. Here it is!"

He subtracted the second missive from the vase alluded to, gave it to his master, and withdrew.

Walter read the notes in the order of their dates. The first was a pleasant bantering epistle, expressing wonder that he should fail

to keep his appointment with his betrothed, and hoping that he would be able to offer a satisfactory excuse. The second letter was dated that very morning, and expressed much solicitude in regard to his silence and absence, and desired to know without delay if he were ill.

"I wonder Geraldine did not inform her ladyship of the contents of my letter," mused Walter. "No mention is made of Geraldine in her note of this morning, and it is possible that she has not seen her since writing the first. Her ladyship could hardly receive a letter from me before three, and at that hour I will visit her!"

At that moment the artist's musings were interrupted by the return of the valet, bearing a dainty breakfast upon a salver, which he deposited on a low stand by the side of the couch.

"How is my friend this morning, Parkin?" asked the young gentleman, when he had complimented his servant upon the delicate repast. "You have given him the medicines as directed?"

"Yes, sir; and he's quieter now, though his fever seems as bad as ever. I will stay with him, sir, while you eat your breakfast, and can hear your bell there as well as in the ante-room."

Walter nodded, and Parkin withdrew into the bed-chamber.

When he had finished his breakfast the artist visited his guest, remaining with him while the valet attended to his duties. The ravings of the sick gentleman had subsided into incoherent mutterings, but his movements were frequently quite violent, as if defending himself against an enemy, and his fever had not in the least abated.

At noon the physician made his second visit, leaving fresh medicines, and again declaring his expectation of breaking up the fever within a week.

Some time after his departure, Walter placed his guest in charge of his valet, and withdrew to his dressing-room, from which he emerged an hour later, looking as fresh as a bath and thorough toilet could make him.

"I am going out, Parkin," he said, standing in the doorway connecting the dressing-room with the bed-chamber. "I shall sit up with my friend to-night, so that you can rest. Don't admit any person in my absence except the doctor. As soon as I am gone you can tie a card to the door-knob to the effect that I am not at home. You'll find such a card with the inscription in the letter-vase!"

"Yes, sir," responded Parkin. "But if the gentleman who came home with you last night, sir—the eccentric gentleman, sir—should come, shall I admit him?"

The valet hardly knew in what terms to mention Lorraine. He knew that that individual called himself the father of the artist, but he would not have called him so for a pension, it being the greatest grief of the faithful Parkin that his handsome young master could not bear a title and be surrounded by noble relatives.

"If the 'eccentric gentleman' should come, Parkin," replied Walter, "you can tell him that I am not at home. Do not admit him in my absence. I will mention now that I want no one to know of my friend's presence in my rooms. You can keep it secret?"

The valet assented, and his young master knew the secret would be safe with him. After a few additional directions, Walter took his departure and proceeded to Rosebury House.

He was ushered into the boudoir where Lady Rosebury was seated, a book in her lap, and a sad and thoughtful expression on her beautiful face.

Her ladyship uttered an exclamation of joy on beholding her favourite, and arose, saying,—

"So here is the truant at last! You look pale and tired, Walter! I knew you must be ill! If you had not come now I should have visited your rooms at five o'clock. Sit down

on the sofa by me, and tell me about your illness!"

Her ladyship drew Walter upon the sofa beside her.

"Dear Lady Rosenbury, I have not been ill—"

Here he hesitated, undecided how best to finish the sentence. He had been so absorbed in his sick guest, and in his endeavours to reform Lorraine, that he had bestowed very little thought upon his future explanations in regard to his absence. Eminently truthful, he had almost decided to tell the whole story, but how could he reveal to a mother the guilt of her son.

"You have not been ill?" repeated Lady Rosenbury. "I thought, Walter, that illness alone could have kept you from Geraldine, who waited for you that evening of your appointment."

"Your ladyship has not seen her since?"

"No, Walter. I promised to send a servant to inquire at your rooms, and let her know the result. I sent as promised, but learned that you had gone out the day before, and had not yet returned. My servant left my note to you, and stated that your valet was somewhat alarmed in regard to your absence. I did not inform Geraldine of my messenger's report, deeming no news better than that. I sent again this morning and learned that you were at home. You received my note?"

"I did, your ladyship, and the bouquets accompanying it—many thanks for them."

"And so, Walter," said Lady Rosenbury, smiling, "your absence is to be made a mystery? Raymond tells me that there is a very silly report about you; but Geraldine and I could only smile at its extreme silliness. What do you suppose the report is?"

"I am sure, your ladyship, that I cannot imagine."

"Why, that you had eloped with an heiress to Scotland!"

"Lord Rosenbury has dared to say that!" exclaimed Walter, his countenance kindling with indignation. "The story is his own base invention. He knew it to be utterly false!"

"He gained no credence, my dear boy," responded her ladyship. "I think he had no faith in the report, for he knows you are the favoured suitor of Lady Geraldine."

"I know he and he alone could have originated the report, your ladyship," said Walter, quietly. "I will explain to you where I have been since my last visit here. The next day after seeing you and Geraldine, my unhappy father came to me and informed me that he had purchased a sloop for his own pleasure, and was going to take a voyage immediately. Fearful that the vessel might be unseaworthy I offered to go on board with him and look at it. I did so. He had a little repast prepared for me, and I ate and drank with him. The wine was drugged!"

"Drugged!"

"Yes, your ladyship. I took very little, and to that temperance I owe my life. Had I taken more I should never have been awakened in this life. I fell asleep, and when I awakened late the next day, we were out at sea proceeding northward."

"How singular!"

"The first sight that met my vision was my miserable father in an agony of remorse and despair at my supposed death. He had intended to make me the companion of his cruise northward. In his joy at my recovery he confessed the plan, gave his seaman an order to go shorewards, and I despatched a note to Lady Geraldine, informing her of my whereabouts. I returned on the sloop with him, partly to assure him of my forgiveness, and partly to improve the opportunity of having a thorough talk with him. At the moment of re-embarking I had another reason, which I will explain hereafter."

"What an unnatural father!" exclaimed her ladyship, pressing the artist's hands in sympathy. "Lorraine's conduct towards you

since the commencement of your existence has always been a mystery to me. I may add that Mrs. Lorraine's conduct was no less singular. They both seemed to regard you with a respectful sort of idolatry. I have looked in at their cottage at meal-times, when you were a tiny fellow, and noticed that while their dishes were of the plainest delf, yours was of painted china. The daintiest morsels were always given you, and your clothing was as fine and rich as Raymond's. Perhaps I had something to do with the last item," she added, with a smile. "This strange love must be the reason your father tried to carry you off. He wanted you all to himself."

"His motive was hardly so creditable as that," said the artist, sadly. "It is singular that Geraldine has not made you acquainted with the contents of her letter."

"It is, indeed—"

Her ladyship's sentence remained unfinished, for at this juncture the door opened, and Lady Geraldine Sammers entered unannounced.

"Walter here!" was the first exclamation, as her gaze rested upon her lover, and her face became confused with blushes.

"Walter is here," responded the artist, springing forward to meet his betrothed, and pressing her to his bosom. "You received my letter, and I have not been anxious?"

As he conducted Geraldine to a seat beside Lady Rosenbury she answered,—

"I have received no letter from you, Walter, and I have been anxious!"

"Not received my letter! Why, I posted it myself!"

"It failed to reach me. Perhaps my uncle detained it!"

This explanation was instantly adopted as the true one; and, in answer to Geraldine's inquiries, Walter related to her the same explanation he had already given Lady Rosenbury in regard to his absence.

Her ladyship left the lovers to themselves, finding pleasant occupation with a cabinet of coins in a distant corner, and the artist drew his betrothed to him, indulging in tender converse with her.

Lady Rosenbury once directed a loving glance at the young couple, which glance became one of admiration as she marked the exceeding beauty of each and the perfect contrast they presented to each other. She noted the clear dark complexion, the dusky eyes, the sweet, yet spirited expression of Geraldine's countenance; but her gaze lingered longer and more fondly upon the tawny moustache, the golden hair and violet eyes of the young artist, and she sighed deeply as she at length withdrew her glances. Every time she beheld him Walter Lorraine seemed to have become more and more the counterpart of the husband of her youth and early womanhood—the husband of whom not a single characteristic had descended to her son Raymond.

Her ladyship's reveries were at length interrupted by the sound of Lord Rosenbury's approaching footsteps in the corridor, and she arose and came forward just as he entered.

"I understand that Lady Geraldine Sammers is here, your ladyship?" he said, courteously, and observing the lovers.

Lady Rosenbury, observing that she was unintentionally screening the young couple, stepped aside, and Rosenbury's gaze fell upon Walter.

Had the artist been a disembodied spirit, Rosenbury could not have been more startled at seeing him.

He had believed him already dead—buried beneath the waves of a northern sea—not once having dreamed of the possibility of the failure of his schemes, of their betrayal by Lorraine.

"You here?" he exclaimed, becoming deathly pale, and sinking into a chair.

"Walter Lorraine here?"

"Yes, my lord, I am here!" replied Walter, his tone unconsciously stern. "I returned this morning from a little voyage—"

"A voyage?" repeated Rosenbury, with trembling lips. "Ah, yes!"

His lordship glanced at Lady Rosenbury, and at Lady Geraldine, and fancied that he detected in their looks and manner an unusual coldness towards himself. In this he was perhaps right, for both ladies believed him to be the author of the report to which he had alluded on a previous occasion; and knew he had intended to injure Walter in their estimation. His fears, however, made him spring to the conclusion that the artist had gained a knowledge of his villainous scheme, and had communicated it to both the ladies.

The very idea almost paralysed him.

A thousand times since his visit to Lorraine's lodgings had he pictured Walter dead, drowned, and by his orders; and his conscience had pronounced him a murderer. He had slept little, being continually haunted by the pangs of guilt, and at any moment he would have given half his fortune for the power to undo his wickedness; yet now that he beheld him safe and well his murderous instinct rose again, and could he have done so unseen he would have stricken him dead at his feet.

The artist turned from the pale and trembling Raymond, and reopened a conversation with Lady Geraldine. But Lady Rosenbury stood, pale as a statue, with an anxious and apprehensive countenance, regarding her son. She had noticed his very singular pallor and emotion at beholding Walter, had observed the artist's unconscious sternness when replying to him, and, being keen of sight and judgment, had mentally decided that there was some mystery between the young men. That that mystery had its origin in guilt on the part of Raymond his manner seemed to evidence.

As Rosenbury had time to collect his thoughts he reflected that, after all, he might have no great cause for alarm. It was true that his victim had in some way escaped the snare laid for him, but it was not equally evident that Lorraine had made a confession to him that could in any way implicate his lordship. Thus reassuring himself, he resolved to ascertain the extent of his knowledge of his scheme.

"Walter," he said, "can I see you a moment in the library? I have something of importance to say to you."

"Your lordship will excuse me," replied the artist, courteously.

Rosenbury bit his lips, his face becoming an angry red, and inwardly resolved that an explanation should be made before Walter should leave the house. Noticing that Lady Rosenbury continued to regard him intently, he arose abruptly and quitted the room, stationing himself outside the door in a position to hear all that might be said in the boudoir.

At first there was nothing to reward his eavesdropping, but at length he heard Walter say,—

"I promised, dear Lady Rosenbury, to explain a third reason for coming home on my father's sloop instead of returning by rail. In order to make this reason intelligible, I must relate an event which occurred at Rook Land. As you know, I went thither to paint pictures. One evening a singular and wild-looking gentleman appeared at my tent, imploring my aid. I gave him food and clothing and some money, but learnt nothing of his history except that he had some terrible enemy who had imprisoned him in a lunatic asylum while he was perfectly sane!"

"How terrible!" murmured Geraldine.

"While endeavouring to learn from him who he was he suddenly fled from me, and soon after I heard a wild cry and the sound of waggon-wheels. I concluded that he had been captured by his pursuers. The next evening, Geraldine, we met by the rocks, and your uncle came upon us. After he took you home I noticed a yacht enter the bay, and watched it for some time in silence. A signal seemed to be interchanged between the yacht and Rook Land, but the apparent signal may be

otherwise explained. At length I started to return home, and came upon my poor fugitive, chained and guarded by two men. I had an opportunity to exchange a word with him, and then men landed from the yacht and carried him and his guards off to the yacht, which sailed away!"

"What a singular mystery!" commented the maiden.

"How the poor gentleman must have suffered!" exclaimed Lady Rosenbury. "Shut up as insane by an enemy—what a horrible fate! And you did not hear his name?"

"No, your ladyship. After posting my letter at Barleyford, I overheard two men speaking of the escape of a lunatic from a place called Mure Hall, and from their remarks I thought the escaped person might be the fugitive I had encountered. With this idea, I resolved to return to the sloop, and explain to my father that I must return to town by rail. As I signalled him I noticed an object upon the beach, which object proved to be the fugitive himself, delirious with fever. We took him on board the sloop, and he is now at my rooms. I desire to keep the story secret until after his recovery, lest his enemy should discover him! He is a gentleman, I am sure. Possibly your ladyship might have some suspicion of his identity?"

"No, I have none," said Lady Rosenbury. "He is probably a person whom I have never seen. But I feel sympathy for him, and I hope he may recover and defeat his enemy."

Walter seemed disappointed that her ladyship could give him no clue to the stranger's identity, and Lady Rosenbury remarked,—

"Suppose Geraldine should relate the story to her uncle and ask his opinion? Lord Montford has a very extensive acquaintance, and might be able to give you valuable information. Geraldine's telling him the story may interest him in you, Walter. He will see how generous you are, and may withdraw his opposition to your suit, for I cannot think the Earl utterly heartless!"

(To be continued.)

A GREAT COST.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"FOWLER, pack my old valise," Lady Castleton said to her waiting woman. It was the afternoon of the day Lord Castleton had made his early call upon Lady Bridgeworth. "Go and tell Miss Barbara to come to me, and see that a small quantity of her clothes is put together immediately. We shall go to London by the six o'clock train."

Barbara came hurrying to her grandmother at once, her lovely face full of anxiety. This journey was so extraordinary. Had anything happened? Was there something wrong with Bertie? Ah! her heart was so prone to uneasiness now. Her anxiety was allayed when Lady Castleton showed her the boy's telegram.

"Bring B at once to town. To-day, if possible. Go to —'s Hotel."

"Bertie wastes no words," Lady Castleton said.

She never thought of disobeying the boy's mandate. She knew he would never have sent such a message unless it had been urgent.

He met them at the station, and escorted them to the hotel, full of solicitous care and tenderness to the old lady, who detested travelling.

"You will find yourself close to Grannie, darling!" he said to his cousin. His whole bearing was full of a sort of excitement that communicated itself to Barbara in a vague sort of way. "Fowler, take Miss Vereker to room No. 12; and Babs, dear, you must please

be very delighted with your dog. He is there waiting for you."

"Now, Bertie, what does this mean, eh?" queried Lady Castleton, once they were alone, and she had recovered herself a little.

She had the whole story in less than ten minutes.

"Lady Bridgeworth confessed to this? Confessed to you?" she said. She stared up at him incredulously. It was incomprehensible to her the motive, the mean action, and now this reparation. "Are you sure she is not making a fool of you, Bertie?" the old lady asked, sharply.

"Quite," the young man answered. "Why should she, Grannie? She had sent for me before I went to get any information from her. I assure you, Grannie, if you were to see her now you would be sorry for her. Poor thing! I pity her with all my soul!"

"I am afraid I do not possess your soft heart, Bertie," the old lady said, coldly. She was horrified that a woman, and a gentlewoman, could have been guilty of such treachery, such cowardly cruelty! "I have no desire to see Lady Bridgeworth again, or to remember she even exists," she added, firmly. There was a little pause, and then Lady Castleton said, "And he is here in this hotel—my clever boy—my dear, dear boy!" The worn, white hand closed over his strong, sturdy one with a pressure that spoke all the tenderness in her heart.

"Oh! I am all right, Grannie. Don't bother about me. We must think of the others, you know," Bertie said, with a laugh, and a flush of colour to his face for the moment.

"Now," Lady Castleton said, firmly, "I am going to Humphrey Lascelles as fast as I can go. I cannot rest until I have asked his pardon for wronging him. No, Bertie, this time I am going to have my own way. Show me his room, and then leave me. Go to Barbara and prepare her a little. Poor child! She does not even guess what is in store for her. I leave her in your hands, my boy! Come, I am ready."

Lord Castleton turned a little pale, but he obeyed her, as he had been wont to do all his life; and he led her to the room where Humphrey Lascelles was pacing to and fro, his worn, thin face grown flushed into all its accustomed vigour and handsomeness in this moment of acute excitement.

He waited to see the door open, to see his grandmother stretch out both her hands to Barbara's lover, and then he closed the door and went in search of her who must be forever shut out of his heart and life after to-day.

She ran to meet him full of ecstacy over the dog.

"Dear, dear Bertie, I shall love him because you gave him to me!" she cried, putting up her lovely face quite naturally. "I must kiss you my thanks, brother Bertie."

He drew back hurriedly, his heart beating wildly.

"I—I have not given you all yet, Babs," he said, and his voice was full of meaning.

She turned a little pale—he spoke so unlike himself.

"Have you something more for me, Bertie?"

He took her hands in his.

"Yes, darling!" he said as steadily as he could speak. "I have the best of all for you. Your happiness, your heart, Babs," as she stood very, very still, grown white as ashes.

"Can you guess what I mean, Babs, dear?"

She looked at him with her beautiful, pleading eyes. He was not used to such work as this. It made a great change in him.

"Bertie," she said, but the agitation within her made her speak almost inaudibly, "don't—don't tease me—don't." She clung to his hands. "If you have anything to say—tell me—tell me quickly. I—"

"Come into Grannie's room," he answered, and he led her across the passage.

He felt that he longed to break the news to her. He longed to tell her how near she was

to the one being for whom she had pined and drooped as a flower left alone bruised, broken, and desolate, and yet—yet it was not easy.

She looked about her as she entered the room.

"Where is Grannie?" she asked, quickly.

Every nerve in her body was quivering. She felt she was on the eve of some great event. She was nervous, frightened. She was trembling in every limb. All was strange to her.

Bertie was not a bit like himself. He spoke so differently—he looked so different, too. A sort of hazy dream had fallen over her as she moved from her room into this one—a momentary sense of oblivion; but as she stood alone with Bertie this cleared away suddenly, and she recalled his words with a sort of start. Something had happened. Her heart beat to suffocation.

"You have something to tell me, Bertie?" she cried. She paused a moment, and then her lips framed rather than spoke the word "Humphrey."

"Humphrey is here, Babs!" Lord Castleton said, very gently, "with his sister. That is why I sent for Grannie and you to come without delay. There has been an explanation at last, thank Heaven, my poor little sister!" He drew her closer to him for a moment, then went on hurriedly. "Babs, he loves you. He has loved you all the time. There is a great deal to be told you, but Humphrey is as true as steel, and always has been. You understand me, Babs, darling?"

Her face was grown so white he feared she was about to faint. He tried to put her into a chair, but she shook her head.

"I—I am quite well, Bertie, but," her voice came back with a sort of wail, "he—he is ill—he is ill, Bertie! I know it—I know it!"

"Not now, little girl. He is almost as well as he ever was; and now, when he gets you, he will be quite cured, but he has been ill! Don't, darling!" he said brokenly, as she covered her face with her hands. "Everything is all right now, Babs. There is nothing to make you unhappy. Come, look up at me, and tell me you were right to trust your—your brother, after all!"

Barbara answered him by burying her face on his breast, and putting her arms about him. She stood silent for a moment, and then she looked up at him. He understood the meaning of that look.

"You shall see him directly, darling!" he said, as steadily as he could. "Grannie—ah! here is Grannie!"

But it was not Lady Castleton's figure that stood in the doorway. Lady Castleton was not young and fair, with a delicate flushed face, and soft, brown hair.

Barbara gave a little cry, and then she hid Muriel in her arms. It was she who was the protector now, she who was the stronger of the two. She and Muriel seemed to have changed places in this moment—it was such a poor fragile likeness of the Muriel she knew and loved so well.

Lord Castleton stood irresolute for a moment, then he walked quietly away. His task was done; there was no more to be added to it. Babs was happy at last—he was content. Content, and yet there was a sense of bursting agony in his heart that was more than he could endure. There was no jealousy of the man who stood in the place he desired; there was nothing but a yearning that was pain, and a hopelessness that was like nothing he had ever experienced before.

He strode down the stairs hurriedly. In a little while he would return; but now he felt there was nothing for him to do but to go forth into the streets, and fight out his trouble alone.

"I shall have to go away," he said to himself, as he went into the damp night air. "Not for long, for that would hurt dear old Grannie but just for a little while. I shall come back quite cured then." His lips quivered a little. He had left the shop lights and was in a bye-street. There was no one to see him dash

the tears from his eyes. He was better for those tears. "I am a selfish brute," he said to himself. "I think of no one but myself, and she is happy to-night. That ought to content me, and it shall. Heaven bless her! Heaven bless her always!"

It was such a quiet meeting between those two, after all. Seeing Muriel first had given Barbara a sort of strength. She felt almost calm, as her grandmother led her to Humphrey. Her little hands clung together for one moment, as she stood alone; then she had pushed open the door, and then—well, then she was lying on Humphrey's breast, with her lips pressing kisses on the poor broken arm, and a sense as of Heaven stealing throughout her whole frame.

She never knew, she never realised, until this moment, when she stood against his heart, how terrible had been the blank of the last few weeks. Her brain was in a whirl of joy, excitement, anxiety, for his health, and fear—sudden, breathless fear.

"Oh! Humphrey, Humphrey!" she cried, brokenly. "You will never leave me again. I—I could not live without you now. I should die!"

"My heart!" Humphrey said, his face transfigured with happiness, yet, bearing the same traces of agitation as hers did, "and do you think that I could live! Oh! Babs, Babs, cling to me. My love! My wife, mine and mine alone! My heart, my soul!"

She obeyed him, clinging to him as though her life depended on the touch and protection of his strong arm about her. She asked no questions, the wanted no explanations. In this moment to her there was nothing but Humphrey—Humphrey weak and wan, with his left hand slung across his breast, bearing witness to the truth that he had been very ill, suffering, and she had not been near him. She did not dare to look much into his face. The change in it, the pallor, the wanness, all hurt her. Her self-reproach was so great, and she had thought him cruel, false, all that was strange and unmanly, while he had been lying in bed struggling for his very life. Muriel had said it, and though there had not been time to learn all that had happened, Barbara knew enough.

"Oh, Humphrey, Humphrey!" she said, brokenly, "if I could forgive myself! If I could only forget all the horrible, wicked thoughts!"

Humphrey kissed her hair, thrown in glorious profusion across his breast. He did not say very much—words were not easy to him, when he remembered how this child had suffered, how he had suffered, how Muriel had suffered. He felt he could not bear to realise that such a woman as Josephine Bridgworth ever existed.

It was a great shock to him, this revelation of her treachery. He had grown to like and esteem her so sincerely. His gratitude for her untiring devotion during the past weeks had been almost indescribable, and now—now.

It was Lady Castleton who told the whole story to Barbara. That night before they both went to the rest they so much needed, as Babs sat with Muriel's arms twined about her, her grandmother spoke out quietly and contemptuously all Josephine's confession. Barbara sat absolutely silent; she had grown very white.

"I cannot believe it," was what she first said. She put Muriel's arm from her, and stood up by the fire. "Grannie," she said, quickly, her voice full of horror, "it can't be true. Oh! it can't be true. Why should she do such a thing to me? I never harmed her! I would have loved her if she had let me. Poor Phina! I was always sorry for her!"

Lady Castleton looked at the lovely young face flushed with pain. The cynical smile faded from her lips. The cynicism she would have uttered on the world and the world's inhabitants was not uttered.

"Why rob her of all faith?" the old

woman said to herself. "It will come all too soon, alas!"

Barbara turned to Muriel as her grandmother made no answer.

"Can you believe this, Muriel?" she cried. Muriel's gentle, pretty eyes were full of tears.

"I—I am afraid I must, Babs, dear!" she answered.

There was no hot anger in Muriel's heart for her false friend. There was only a shrinking from seeing her again, from coming in contact with her. Apart from the harm she had done to Humphrey and Babs was the memory of the wrong she had cast on Owen Griffiths' character, and Muriel's heart found this almost the most difficult to forgive.

Barbara made no reply to Muriel's speech. Her eyes were full of such pain as made her grandmother's heart contract.

"Come, child!" she said, sharply, to hide the real state of her feelings, "come—to bed—to bed. You have had a most exciting day. Your brain and body needs rest, and this child here looks like a sleepy flower nodding on its stem. Fowler, take Miss Lascelles to her room, and tell her maid to put her to bed at once. Yes—yes, my dear, give me a kiss. Are you not my little Barbara's sister? Babs—Babs," very tenderly, as the girl came back from escorting Muriel to the door, "what is it, child?"

Barbara knelt down before her knee.

"Grannie," she said, her voice low, and full of tears, "oh! my heart grieves for her—grieves. How she must be suffering! I know her nature. Is she not proving the beauty of her nature, after all, in this confession that makes you so angry?" The tears were beginning to steal down the fair cheeks. Barbara spoke on hurriedly. "Somehow, I am drawn to her to-night. Somehow, the mist rolls away, and I see into the past. She loved me then, Grannie, in those old days when I was a baby, with no one to care for me. Oh! Phina was good to me, and good to Cyril, and—and he broke her heart. I saw the difference in her at once when we met again, but I did not understand it. Sometimes, Grannie, when—when Cyril and I were alone together—I need to speak of Phina, and asked him why she never wrote or came to us; and he made no answer, Grannie, because, you see, he could not answer. Oh! if I had only known, if I had been old enough to understand! And now—now—"

"And now when she has done her best to break your heart out of petty spite, jealousy, and revenge," Lady Castleton said, making an attempt to speak in her old sharp way, and not quite succeeding, "you are crying your eyes out over her, and forgiving the most cruel wrong that woman ever tried to do!"

Barbara kissed the wrinkled white hand. "We all do wrong, Grannie," she said, softer, "and—and Phina loved Cyril!"

There was a wealth of meaning in those last words. Let her have sunk ever so low, the woman who had loved Cyril Vereker would never be cast out of his sister's life and thoughts.

Bertie came in as the girl lay in the old woman's arms.

"She is a very strong-willed, opinionated angel," Lady Castleton said, looking up into his inquiring eyes. "Here, Bertie, carry her to her room, or we shall have her an angel in reality."

Bertie did not carry her, but he led her up to her own door. They stood silent there, she holding his hand.

"You want something. What is it, darling?" he asked, tenderly.

He felt stronger, calmer, better altogether for that silent self-communion up in the dark streets.

"I want to go to her, Bertie, to—to tell her there is nothing but love and forgiveness in—"

"Dear little sister, she is gone. She left England to-night."

Barbara sighed a sigh that was full of sorrow.

"I will write to her," she said. She looked at him. Somehow she had such faith and trust in him. "She—she. Oh! Bertie, you know what is in my heart when I think of Cyril, and remember!"

Bertie was silent for a moment.

"You shall write your note, and I will carry it to her myself. How will that please you, little sister?"

"Oh! Bertie," her face illumined suddenly, "I cannot bear to think of her all alone, when we are all so happy!"

"And—and you are happy, Babs?" the boy asked, with a little catch in his voice.

She gave him a tender smile.

"But for this," she said, "I do not think it would be possible for anyone in this world to be happier than I am, Bertie, and all through you!"

"Good-night!" he said, suddenly. He could hear no more. "Good-night, Babs!" He would have bent low over her hands, but she stood up and put her lips to his, and so he kissed her for the first and last time!

CHAPTER XXXIV, AND LAST.

"We will have a June wedding," Lady Castleton said. "By then, perhaps, the boy will be back!"

"Oh! I cannot be married till Bertie comes home!" Barbara always said.

She had said that all through the spring, even when Humphrey had laughingly teased her because she let Muriel have a marriage before her, and then tenderly urge and plead with her that he was lonely at Brackenbury all by himself, and she had promised Muriel she would not let him stay there too long alone.

"Oh! well, you know, if I am only going to marry you because I promised Muriel. Well!" and Barbara would finish her saucy speech with a shrug of her graceful shoulders.

Yes; she had actually grown saucy. She had grown younger and more childlike. The childhood that had been denied her came to her now.

She was beautiful to watch. Surrounded by love, by protecting arms, having the purest and sweetest sympathies about her she grew and expanded as neither Humphrey nor her grandmother could ever have imagined it was possible for her to do.

Of course, there were still one or two clouds on the brilliant horizon of her life. There was the perpetual grey shadow of Cyril's memory lurking in the background of the brightest picture. It was a shadow full of indefinite fear of yearning, love, and sorrow, and hopelessness. For time went on, and still the mystery of Cyril Vereker remained a mystery. In spite of Mr. Ferrars' ceaseless inquiries, in spite of all Humphrey had done and was doing, there came no news to say whether the man who had broken Josephine Newton's young heart lived, or was reckoned among the dead.

Then there was the cloud of remembrance that hung about this same Josephine. No one spoke her name at Coombe.

There were no loud protestations from anyone of the people whom she had wronged; but in all their hearts, save Barbara's, there was nothing left of the former friendship and respect but contempt and amazement at her abasement.

Even Owen Griffiths and his gentle mother could not bring themselves to forgive her; and they could not fail to be relieved and glad when they learned that Lady Bridgworth had started on a tour of the world, and would be absent two years or more. And long before that time was elapsed the small household at Torchester Rectory would be settled in the living which Lord Castleton had placed at Owen's disposal before leaving England.

Barbara's third and last cloud, though by

no means the last, was this fact of Bertie's continued absence from his home.

She grieved for him herself. She wanted Humphrey to love him as a brother, and she knew that the old Grannie's heart beat heavily while he was away.

As time went on she determined to write to him.

"I am to be married in June, on the fifteenth. Humphie absolutely refuses to wait any longer, and Grannie says it is to be, and you know that is final; but, Bertie, I can't have my wedding without you! Do come home, dear! We long to see you. We talk of you all day long. We wonder what you are doing, and if you are well! You know you are not a very good correspondent, Bertie dear; in fact, I call your letters very mean indeed—not like Muriel's. She wrote me pages and pages when she and Owen went on their honeymoon. They are so ridiculously happy I wish you could see them. Muriel makes an ideal Rector's wife. She grows prettier every day. Humphie is waiting to take me for a ride, so I cannot send you more news now; but I want you to come home. Promise me you will! I want you! Humphie wants you! Fowler positively pines to have someone to tease her and Grannie. Well, you know you are Grannie's very life, so you can imagine she does not live very well without you.—Ever, dear Bertie, your loving and devoted sister, —BABS."

"P.S.—By making a great calculation I find you could get here just in time for the wedding—that is, if you are still in America, and start off at once. Oh! Bertie dear, my happiness will not be complete without you. Come! come! come!"

She wrote this letter and despatched it, saying nothing to anyone, not even to Humphrey. If she looked brighter than usual, and laughed more lightly, they put it down to her contentment of her life in general, and to no particular cause.

She kept her secret. She felt sure that Bertie would come if he got her letter, but she did not want to rouse her grandmother's eagerness and excitement only to have it crushed beneath a disappointment which, at her age, would be bitter and lasting.

So she held her own counsel, only she let herself plan all sorts of delightful things that were to happen when Bertie arrived.

"Do you know I am a little, just a little, inclined to be jealous of Bertie?" Humphrey said to her one morning as they paid their daily visit to Lord Castleton's pets—his dogs, his horses, his "den," where all his old clothes hung, and his pipes and gloves were scattered about.

Barbara faced her lover.

"Oh! Humphie, darling!" she said.

"Well, I am!" Humphrey asserted, kissing her little hand.

Barbara was quite shocked.

"Why, I love you, Humphie!" she said, "and Bertie is only my brother!"

He transferred his kisses to her sweet lips. He said no more. Like Lady Castleton, he desired that no word should be breathed that might brush away the exquisite bloom of her young, innocent mind.

Humphrey had guessed Bertie's secret, partly from intuition, partly from converse with Lady Castleton; but it was a secret that was sacred with him, and never from his lips should Barbara guess the truth.

"She would break her heart if she thought he was unhappy," Humphrey said to himself. "Poor Bertie!" was all he said, out loud, and at that Barbara laughed.

"Poor Bertie! Oh, no! Rich, happy Bertie! He has everything in this world. Everybody loves him. Humphie, we must make him marry. Perhaps, if we look about we can pick up some wail and stray creature like me, and then—"

"Poor Bertie!" Humphrey said again—this time with a different inflection in his voice, and a twinkle in his handsome eyes.

"Oh!" Barbara exclaimed, and then she chased him through the grounds, and caught him at last, only to be twisted off her feet into his strong arms and carried thus ignominiously to Grannie's room, and deposited on Grannie's knees.

"You are a couple of children!" Lady Castleton observed at this behaviour. "When, may I ask," fixing her eyes upon Humphrey, "when do you intend to grow up and behave properly?"

"Never!" Humphrey answered, recklessly, "so long as being young and behaving badly means happiness! That is our maxim, Grannie!"

And it was one they carried out most amply and satisfactorily as time went on.

Bertie was in a little out of the way town in America when Barbara's letter reached him, forwarded on from his bankers in New York. He read it through, biting his lips as he read to stop their involuntarily quivering. When he had come to the end he tilted his straw hat over his eyes. The glare and heat of the sun was tremendous, and he looked away into the far distance.

"I will write to her. She will get the letter just—just in time. Thank Heaven, I have the best of all excuses to give. Everything has its compensating side if we only accept it as such." With which philosophical speech Lord Castleton went back to his hotel, and sat down, and wrote two letters. The first was to Babs.

"I am awfully—awfully sorry, darling little sister!" he wrote, "but I cannot get back in time to grace your wedding. I have planned up a long route with another chap who came across with me—Meredith, of the Guards. And now I am out here I may as well see a bit of the world. It isn't to be compared with our world, dear Babs. Tell Grannie I said so. She always thought I should be a horrid radical, so this conservatism will be consoling to her dear old political heart."

"And now, Babs, dear, for the most important reason of all. Don't get nervous. Don't open those pretty eyes too wide. (How plainly he could see them before him! He covered his own for a moment, and then went on writing rapidly.) Babs, dear, I—I have found a trace of Cyril at last. I have been following up unsatisfactory clues more or less ever since I came out; in fact, it was one of my chief reasons for coming."

"I would not tell you before I started, for I did not want to fill you with delusive hopes all to end in nothing; but now—now, Babs, I may come across him at any moment, and then—well, we shall see what won't happen. At least he will find a staunch, true kinsman in me—a brother if he will accept me as readily as you have done. I will write you again by next mail, and tell you how everything progresses; but I want you to get this letter before you are married. Babs, dear little Babs, a real live bride! Heaven bless you, Babs, and your Humphie! I know you will be happy! He is the best chap out, and he—well, there is only one Babs, and she is very, very dear to her loving brother,

"BERTIE."

The handsome face was very pale as he finished this scrawl, for writing was not one of his accomplishments. He drank some iced water, muttered something about the heat, and then set himself to write his second letter.

It was addressed to Lady Bridgeworth at a hotel in New York, and was very brief.

"I have found him at last. We have not met yet. I am told he is in a bad way, mixed up with an awful lot. At present he is hiding here, escaped from some big gambling swindle. There are one or two of the gang here in hiding too. From the few inquiries I have made I hear he is drinking hard. Are you still steadfast to your purpose? Will you

still offer this man the chance of redemption, by making him your husband?"

"Dear friend, I entreat you to pause and reflect. I know he is my kinsman. He is Babs' brother, the Babs we both love—you as well as I, Heaven bless her; but it is an awful look-out for you. Please forgive me for saying all this. I know it is awfully presumptuous; but, you see, I am your friend, and I have your future in my mind as I write. Send me word what you want me to do.

"Ever yours faithfully,

"CASTLETON."

Babs' wedding was more than a month old. She was back at Coombe again. The July heat had tried Lady Castleton very much, and Humphrey had carried his wife there direct, instead of going to Brackenbury Court, as they had first intended. Babs was looking eagerly every day for the promised letter from Bertie.

"How like him!" she had exclaimed, when that first one had reached her. "Who would have thought of this but Bertie or you?" she said, giving Humphie a kiss.

The further news about Cyril had not come. By mutual consent the young people kept Bertie's project from his grandmother.

"It will only make her nervous and anxious," Babs said to her husband. "She will imagine Bertie in all sorts of dangers, and then it," with a slight quiver of the delicate lips, "if he should fail to find Cyril after all she would only be disappointed."

And so matters rested, and July ended its days, and still no news from Bertie. Barbara began to be very uneasy, and Humphrey shared her uneasiness.

"I hope to Heaven," he said to himself, "the boy has not got into any difficulty," and although he said this he felt uncomfortable, as though this very difficulty he was thinking of was not only a probability, but an actuality.

They were peaceful, happy days at Coombe. They were so happy together—happy despite the fact that Grannie was palpably fading, and that Bertie never wrote. It was the springtime of their life and love. All was so fresh, so beautiful, so exquisite in that mutual love that even sorrow, close as it might come, could not tarnish or destroy it.

Humphrey's heavy feeling of presentiment cleared away when he was with his wife. Every hour it seemed to him she revealed some new charm, some beauty more delicate and subtle than the others. She was a series of pictures, gorgeous, tender, gentle, laughing, sober, dignified now, with all her new-born dignity, anon wild and full of grace as a kitten; and all through these varying moods his hand, his voice alone, could touch the keynote of her very being. She was his—his only, and his entirely!

The thought was amazing, was bewilderingly heavenly. No wonder that there were moments when Humphrey Lascelles felt almost inclined to doubt the fact of his existence on earth as being real! No wonder that every other thought should take wing and fly from his mind, every other thought but of Barbara, his sweet love, his beautiful wife!

Their dream was broken suddenly. As long as she lived Babs would never forget that hot August day, when Humphrey's voice roused her from a delicious dream over a book.

She was sitting under an awning in the garden. His voice was a revelation. His face roused her from dreamland.

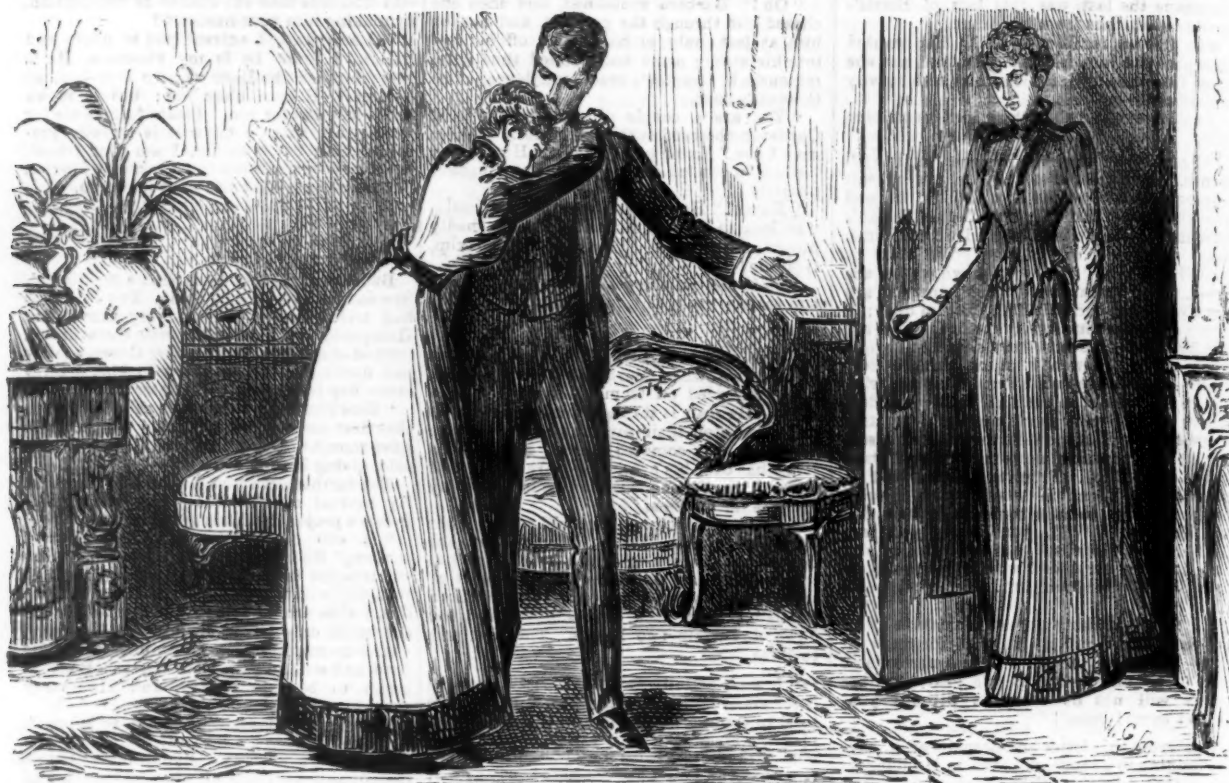
She put out her hand.

"Humphrey, you have some bad news? Tell me, I am not afraid. It is Bertie!" Her husband looked at her for a moment, then wrapped his arms about her.

"How shall we tell her?" he said, when he spoke, and Barbara shivered. What a volume was conveyed in those words!

"Oh!" she cried, suddenly, wildly. "Bertie dead! No—no! you cannot mean it, Humphie!"

To his joy she burst into tears. He had feared she might be worse stricken than this.



[BARBARA ANSWERED HER-TO BY BURYING HER FACE IN HIS BREAST, AND PUTTING HER ARMS ABOUT HIM!]

Holding her in his arms, as clearly, as gently as he could, he told her all he knew. How that morning a letter had come from Josephine Bridgeworth to him, how he had put it aside for an hour, and then something—the American post mark—he scarcely knew what—had made him renounce his first idea of not opening it, and led him to read its contents.

They were briefly written, but the sincerity of the writer's grief was not to be doubted. They spoke of how Lord Castleton had commenced a search for his cousin the very instant he had left England, how he had overtaken her and given her Babs' message of forgiveness, how she had told him of her desire to seek Cyril Vereker, and if he still lived, put herself and her fortune at his feet.

She did not touch on the motives that inspired this action on her part, but they were understood without words.

Then came the mention of how Lord Castleton traced Cyril to a small town, discovered he was in hiding, and communicated the same to her. How she had travelled directly from New York, arriving in this town to find it in grand confusion.

There had been a fracas and quarrel between some new-comers—not of the most desirable class, she learned, and in the heat of the moment revolvers had been used, and one of the men shot. This man was from England.

Josephine's pen was not graphic, but both Humphrey and Barbara were thrilled by her terse description. Her fears had been for Cyril. What, then, was her horror, her anguish, to find that Osbert, Lord Castleton, had been the victim, shot down by mistake by cause of the strong likeness he bore to Vereker.

He had not died immediately. His wound had been fatal, but death was long in coming, and when she would have written or cabled to shore in England he had forbidden this utterly.

He would not have Babs' happiness disturbed even for an hour for his sake. And so

he lingered, nursed night and day by her and by his kinsman, who had been sobered suddenly, as it were, into the likeness of a civilised man by this tragedy, and who did not seem as though he could do enough for the boy who had come so far to search for him, and who had lost his life in the attempt.

Humphrey's eyes were heavy with tears as he murmured words of consolation in Babs' ears.

He spoke of the joy of seeing Cyril once again—Cyril reformed—the husband of the woman whom in days gone by he had treated so cruelly.

He spoke all the words of comfort he could find; but for a time they were useless, and the girl cried as though her heart must break. It was the memory of Grannie that roused her.

"Oh! Humphrey, if we do not tell her now we must before long. They—they are bringing him to England, to put him here in his proper place, and will she ever be able to bear it? Will she ever be able to look on Cyril, who will use his name? And oh! Bertie! Bertie! if you could only come back! I loved you so! I loved you so!"

They sat together long before they could find the courage to face the old lady. Who was to speak? Which of them could deal the blow?

"We will go together!" Babs said. The summer twilight was filling the house. The scent of the flowers greeted them as they went. Fowler met them on the stairs.

"My lady was asking for you, miss! I mean ma'am. She is asleep now, I fancy. I am glad of it, for the heat do try her very much!"

Babs opened the door with her finger on her lip. If she were asleep then there was a respite.

She motioned Humphrey to wait, and went in on tiptoe.

Grannie sat in her chair, her face to the open window. The summer sky was streaked with red-and-gold. It shone on the beautiful,

still old face, on the silver hair, on the clasped hands. It touched the diamonds in the brooch among the laces at her throat. It shone on the table, and illumined the pictures standing there.

Babs felt her lips tremble. They were pictures of herself, and of Bertie—dear, brave, handsome Bertie—who would never—never come back again!

"Oh! Grannie!" she cried, brokenly. "Oh! Grannie!"

There was no answer—no movement, only a deep, strange silence. Then the sunset faded from Babs' eyes, and she lay clasped in her husband's arms, sheltered there by their warmth, by their tender strength, even in the very presence of death itself.

They speak now of the curious coincidence that old Lady Castleton should have died on the very day that the news of her beloved boy's death reached Coombe.

Inanition and weakness of the heart's action, the doctors said, but Babs always shook her head. She had a different theory, but she did not speak it aloud, and so it came to pass that Cyril Vereker was restored to his own—to home—to honour. And he owed it all to his wife, the proud, haughty woman whose greatest joy was to spend an hour in a morning-room in Brackenbury, and worship, with a love that was full of sorrowful memories, the lovely boy-kind of the house, and called just Bertie! "The best name in the world!" as Babs said.

[THE END.]

MORE than nine-tenths of all the tremendous quantity of ale, beer, wine and liquor annually consumed by the men, women and children of Great Britain is served by women. There are nearly two hundred thousand women thus engaged every day in the year.



["NANCY! NANCY! WAKE UP. I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU!" SAID LILLIAS.]

NOVELLETTE.]

HIS WEAK POINT.

CHAPTER I.

A LARGE, old-fashioned wilderness of a garden, where musk and mignonette mingled with wort-weed and dandelions; where golden-hearted lilies and crimson-cheeked roses valiantly held their own against bell-bine and hemlock; whose flower beds blazing with colour, and overrun with every conceivable weed or grass; trees which sadly needed pruning and cutting, as was testified by the small size and quantity of the fruit they bore; grottoes falling into ruins, garden-seats green with the damp and dews of many years. Such a garden is Mr. Kestevan's.

Yet, with all its signs of poverty, its sad decay, on a bright summer day there is something inexpressibly sweet and beautiful in this plot of fragrant ground, surrounding the grey old house where generations of Kestevans have lived and died. A fine old family? Yes; but fallen now on evil days, partly through the extravagance and wild speculations of the present owner's father, and partly because of the decrease in the value of land, the many calamitous years which, unhappily, are too well known amongst our farmers.

Acre by acre was sold or mortgaged, and the mortgages never redeemed, until of all the Kestevan estate nothing remained to Rudolph Kestevan, save the house and garden, together with a small income scarcely sufficient to clothe and maintain himself, his two daughters, and his trusty servant Chummy, who was a veritable Caleb Balderstone, and loved the family he served with the faithful love of a dog.

"There never was a time," he proudly declared, "when a Kestevan had not been

served by a Stoot," and the honour of the race was dearer to him than life. They made a strange party, the father and daughters, and the grey, wizened servant, who was as handy in the garden as in the house.

But what could poor Chummy do in the way of keeping so large a plot of ground in order, when there was the silver to clean, the windows to keep bright, and so much scrubbing and dusting to get through each day? And, beside all these things, there were thousands of odd jobs he felt it his duty to perform; not for worlds would he have seen "his young ladies" with rough, red hands.

Lillias, who was nineteen, was *chef*, and a very clever little *chef* too, Nancy, a year younger, undertook to keep their wardrobes in order, and neither found much work to do. There was very little cooking done in the Kestevan household, and not much mending—for the garments were few, and many of them beyond repairing.

But they were not badly educated, these Kestevan girls, having had the benefit of their father's instruction. They could play well, and Nancy had a voice like a lark. They spoke French and Italian with scarcely any accent, and they could dance solemn old-world dances; although of the wild waltz and gay schottische they knew absolutely nothing. Chummy said the minuet was the proper thing for ladies, and Chummy was an authority in the house.

It is July, and the world is at its loveliest! Just beyond Kestevan Hall the haymakers are busy with the hay, and every passing breeze bears with it the faint sweet scent of the mown grass. A hundred sweet sounds are in the air, and now and again a wild burst of childish laughter rings out to startle the sleepy birds amongst the boughs.

It is high noon, and oh! what a sky meets the upturned, eager gaze! Blue as the frail lobelia—so intensely blue that one thinks

irresistibly of the poet's Italy; and high up shines and burns a ball of fire—the glorious, fervent sun. Little shadows flit and flicker through the green boughs, playing hide and seek across the grass and among the nodding flowers.

On a very much dilapidated garden seat, under the shadow of a huge mulberry, reclines a young girl.

The slim, young form has not yet fully developed, and the gown, which barely reaches the dainty ankles, boasts little of its original colour.

It is only cotton, but it once had been a pretty delicate shade of blue. Now it is a nondescript colour indeed. Then it is short in the skirt, short in the sleeves, too tight across the bust. The waist is full three inches higher than it should be, and taken as a whole, it is a very "skimpy" affair.

But who can think of the shabby gown when looking on the young, fair face, beautiful with strength, purity, and hopefulness!

There is not a single perfect feature in it, and yet Nancy Kestevan is reckoned, even by sternest judges, a rather pretty girl.

Imagine to yourself a girl of medium height, with a throat as white as the lilies at her breast; with a small, piquante face, where the warm blood ebbs and flows with every passing emotion; ripe, red lips, with just a tendency to wilfulness; a rather square chin, with an altogether adorable dimple; a pair of great grey eyes, which change with every change of the owner's mind or heart; a low, broad brow, surrounded by a mass of waving, curling chestnut hair—and there you have Nancy Kestevan.

This morning she is absolutely idle—not even caring to read; but with her shabby hat, well-tilted over her face, she lies with closed lids, dreaming such dreams as come only to the very young and hopeful.

This gallant state of poverty is not always going to last. One day her Prince Charming

is to appear on the scene, and such a generous prince surely never existed out of romance!

He is not only to marry Nancy, but provide a husband for Lillias, to build up the fallen Kestevan fortunes as though by magic, to restore the old house to its pristine beauty and grandeur, to buy back the whole estate at a fabulous price, and to settle such a sum of money on her father and Chummy as shall make all their future easy and happy.

Nancy herself is to play the part of Lady Bountiful to all the worthy poor for miles around; and when she dies, as die she must, all the county will mourn her loss.

Having reached this point Nancy begins to think what manner of death she would choose; and decides that it would be awful to grow old and lose her pretty looks, the girl knows well enough that she is pretty. So she, having reached the ripe age of thirty, will begin to fade slowly and beautifully away, and Nancy feels quite a deep compassion for herself, and conjures up such a pathetic final scene that she could almost cry.

Then comes her epitaph, which, of course, must be elaborate; and she has just rounded a sentence with "the people rise up and call her blessed," when a quick, soft voice says,—"Nance! oh, Nance! wake up, I want to speak to you!"

"Bother!" says Nancy, tilting her hat back, and slowly opening her eyes. "What is it, Lillias? You look scared!"

"And that is just what I am. I did think dad would exercise more common sense than to ask Mr. Lothian to dinner!"

"What!" exclaims Nancy, sitting bolt upright. "Has he done that?"

"Yes, and how on earth were we to get a suitable meal for him, and at so short a notice, I can't conceive. I quite hate Harry Lothian for accepting such an impromptu invite. He is in the breakfast-room with dad now, and waiting to be re-introduced to you."

"Let him wait!" is the polite response. "I'm not coming, and you may tell him so, Lillias, with my respectful compliments."

"Oh! I can't take such a message as that!" despairingly; "and Nance, you must help me in the matter of dinner! But just come up to the house and make your bow!"

"I won't! Why does Harry Lothian call, and not her highness Lady Lothian? Ask him if his mamma gave him permission to call on 'those beggarly Kestevans?'"

"Nance," says Lillias, almost with tears in her lovely blue eyes, "in some things you are as aggravating and obstinate as dad. It would not hurt you to say a few civil words to Mr. Lothian. I am sure we don't often have a visitor!"

"And I for one am glad of that. Those who do occasionally call only come to spy the nakedness of the land, and report to others for their amusement. Oh, yes! I would look well appearing in this old frock, wouldn't I? But, Lillias, is he good-looking?"

"More than that; and he has the pleasantest way with him. Do come!"

"If he were rich, too, I might be induced to submit to an introduction; but my Prince Charming must be wealthy. There, don't look so distressed, my dear, but make any excuse for me you can!"

And Lillias, who knows, by experience, that Nancy can be very determined when she chooses, makes no further remonstrance, but goes slowly back to the house to tell a white lie in her sister's behalf, "she cannot find her!" and the visitor accepts the statement with a grain of salt, for the flash on the lovely face betrays Lillias all too plainly.

Left to herself, Nancy slowly and deliberately walks to the utmost confines of the kitchen garden, and planting her elbows on the low stone wall soliloquises.

"I don't know the Lothians, and I don't intend to know them. Why they wish to scrape an acquaintance with us now I can't think. It's eight years since they came to the Manor, and then Chummy says her ladyship never troubled to call on mamma. I can trust

to his memory in such matters. I daresay Harry Lothian is a conceited prig, and thinks he is conferring a favour upon us by remembering our existence. I won't accept his favours!"

Having relieved her mind to some extent, Nancy finds time to admire the loveliness of the summer scene, and to wish, too, she formed one of that merry, noisy haymaking group.

"Oh, dear!" she sighs, "it is so hard to be a lady and poor, to have to keep up an appearance on nothing per annum!"

"Good-morning, Miss Nancy!" says a manly voice, breaking in upon her reverie. "You, perhaps, do not remember me, although you will guess my identity, since your sister warned you of my coming."

A crimson blush suffuses the girl's face and throat as she turns to look at the new comer.

"You are Mr. Lothian, I suppose," she says, slowly; "and it would have been kinder to accept that little allusion as truth."

"I'm sure I would have done so gladly, but your sister's face spoke volumes," answers the young man, coming up to the low wall, "and I have been wondering ever since why you objected to meet me?"

Nancy gets redder than ever. Her face and throat are burning; but she has not an ounce of false pride in her composition, so she says, bravely, and, oh! what an effort the words cost her,—

"You can't see the whole of my dress. If you could you would not wonder any longer. I suppose your mother's maid would seem to wear such a gown?"

The young man looks unfeignedly distressed, but he answers quickly and earnestly,—

"I do not value my friends according to their possessions; and I remember what good friends we used to be eight years ago, although you were only ten, and I was fifteen. Is it impossible to resume that old relationship?"

"Of course it is," says Nancy, though in a somewhat mollified tone. "I am eighteen now, and young ladies don't play marbles, spin tops, or climb trees."

"I can assure you I also have foresworn those pursuits," Harry answers, leaning over the wall, and looking with evident admiration at the bonny face and the small, babyish white hands; "but there are others which we could mutually share."

Nancy looks incredulous.

"You ought to know," she says, severely, "that Lillias and I go nowhere. People forget to invite us to their places, and if they did we could not accept. Mr. Lothian, what made you wish to come again? You ought to have been wiser than to accept dad's foolish invite."

"Why? I fail to see the folly of it, and you seem to be a very inhospitable young lady. Do you treat all visitors in this fashion?"

"No one has ever been so ridiculous before as to give me the chance; but seriously, Mr. Lothian, you will regret your conduct. We're so horribly poor, I question if we can serve you a decent meal. To ask Heaven! Chummy cannot overhear my confessions! Change your mind before it is too late, and I will carry your excuses to dad and Lillias."

"You are really wasting your eloquence; and I may say, truthfully, I am not a gourmand. Then the chance of renewing our old pleasant intercourse is too good to be thrown away, so you may expect me punctually at six."

"Very well. Your punishment be upon your own head."

Harry laughs a little.

"You aren't changed a bit in one respect; you always were such a blunt, outspoken youngster."

"And years have not given me a greater polish? Thank you for a very left-handed compliment. Oh!" suddenly, "did you ever see a lovelier little thing than our Lillias?"

"She is very beautiful!" Harry answers

in a qualifying tone. "I wonder some lucky fellow hasn't carried her off long since!"

Nancy sighs prodigiously.

"She has no chance here. She is just like that girl of whom the poet says,—

"A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love."

Now, I must be going, I am wanted in the house. Good-morning, Mr. Lothian," and with that she extends a small hand to him.

"Good-bye," he says, holding it fast. "I shall see you this evening?"

"Perhaps; I really don't know," and she tries to release herself, but Harry holds her fast whilst he begs, "You won't hide away from me, will you? Promise me that, and I'll go!"

"I never make rash promises; and you are hurting my hand." With swift compunction he looses the little fingers, and a saucy, mocking laugh breaks from Nancy as she steps back a pace or two. "Good-morning," she says. "Your way lies straight before you, so you cannot possibly miss it," and with another triumphant laugh she flies through bush and bramble, and so is lost to sight.

"I've seen him," she pants as she bursts into her sister's presence, "he is very handsome and very presumptuous—also he has eyes, and he detected you in your neat little falsehood, my dear. And now about ways and means? What sort of fare are we going to provide, and would it be permissible to mix arsenic with his viands, just to prevent a repetition of his most unwelcome visit?"

CHAPTER II.

"THERE!" says Lillias, proudly, surveying the table which their joint efforts have made attractive. "I think Harry Lothian must be hard to please if he discovers a fault anywhere!"

He can't very well dine on silver and glass, with flowers for dessert!" grumbles Nancy, "and there isn't much else to be seen. It may be heretical, but upon my word I call it the height of folly to keep so much plate when there is nothing to put upon it! Why don't papa sell it, and buy us some decent clothes with the proceeds?"

"Miss Nancy," says Chummy, severely, "you must be clean daft to talk in that fashion. It's enough to make the dead and gone Kestevans turn in their graves to hear you."

"Oh, bother the dead and gone Kestevans! The living ones interest me a great deal more; and the question of what we shall eat, and what we shall wear, is of vital importance to me."

"Haven't you any pride in your race, miss?" demands the old man, irately. "To my mind, it's a changeling you must be!"

"Pigeon pie," says Nancy, passing by Chummy's oration with calm contempt. "Pigeon pie! The nastiest dish under the sun; cold beef and salad—more salad than beef, and a oxtard. No side dishes, no jellies, no nothing! And for dessert, some gooseberries, a few small and early apples, and half-a-dozen bunches of white currants!"

"Don't, Nancy!" pleads Lillias, almost in tears. "You will make me so miserable and awkward that I shall certainly be guilty of some awful blunder at table."

"Miss Lillias, dear, you must not let her worry you. She is only a bit of a thing, and don't understand yet that it is an honour to a Lothian to be asked to step inside the ancient house of Kestevan. I doubt if she ever will."

Nancy breaks into blithest laughter.

"You foolish old Chummy, why will you persist in such a fiction? There, I won't say another word to vex you or Lillias, and as for Mr. Lothian, he is perfectly welcome to the pigeons. They never were mine, and I trust they will not impair his digestion. Now, Lily, I am going to dress. Mr. Stoot, farewell," and, with an elaborate curtsy, she runs

laughing from the room, followed more sedately by Miss Kestevan.

Their toilets are simple enough, and precisely alike—plain white muslin gowns, not altogether guiltless of darts, and quite innocent of ribbons and laces; but they are fresh and clean, and Nancy has arranged some delicate sprays of flowers for their further adornment.

Having plaited her sister's wealth of yellow hair and coiled it round and round the shapely head, she proceeds to twist her own chestnut tresses into a quaint and pretty fashion; then declaring herself "ready," precedes Lillias downstairs.

"I'm as hungry as a wolf," she says, as they enter the great, shabby drawing-room. "I hope Mr. Lothian will be punctual."

"Mr. Lothian!" announces Chummy, opening the door with his grandest air; and Lillias, blushing a little, rises to meet him.

"You must be the soul of business," she says, smiling a trifle nervously.

"Am I unfashionably near to time?" he asks, laughing, and letting his eyes wander from her fair face to Nancy's. "I must confess nothing, but the fear of boring you kept me from arriving half-an-hour ago!"

"You would have found no one to receive you," remarks Nancy, coolly. "Lillias and I were but just beginning our toilets. We are busy people here, you know."

"Are you?" comically. "Well, this morning I decided you were just the reverse. You looked the very genius of laziness."

"You should never judge by appearances," says Nancy, severely, and turns to welcome her father.

The dreaded dinner passes over merrily. Chummy, in a very shabby suit of livery, waiting assiduously upon the little party; and although Nancy watches Harry keenly, she detects in him neither surprise nor contempt at what must be, to him, very meagre fare.

He has more than enough to do in watching the two sisters, both so fair although so unlike; and it is only by chance he can catch a full view of the younger's sunny face, she being well-shrouded by a huge bouquet of roses and mignonette.

There is never any lack of flowers at Kestevan Hall, and Nancy is very clever in her arrangement of them—so clever, indeed, that her father is won't to declare she has the soul of an artist.

But in the drawing-room conversation languishes; and presently, with some slight apology to their guest, Lillias produces a chess board.

"It is dad's invariable custom to play one game every evening, Sunday, of course, excepted. You do not mind, Mr. Lothian? Nancy will amuse you."

"She does not play, then?"

"I!" answers Nancy for herself; "no, indeed. Dad invariably wins, and that sort of thing grows monotonous, you know, after a time. Only Lillias has patience for that sort of recreation."

"Then you will show me the garden? It is years since I saw it last!"

"It hasn't improved," says Nancy, as she steps upon the long grass; "but do you know I prefer it to a well-kept place, where one is warned off the lawns, and threatened away from the flower-beds by arbitrary gardeners. And could anything be lovelier than my roses? We have a heap of weeds, but there are a great many old-fashioned flowers beside. May I give you one?"

She has gathered a deep-crimson carnation as she speaks, and holds it towards him now with a little sprig of lavender.

"When I am dead," she says, speaking softly. "I hope they will strew plenty of flowers upon me!"

"Why do you speak of death?" he asks, quickly. "You are too young to have such thoughts!"

"Am I? Death comes to some so soon, why not to me?"

The great grey eyes are very dreamy, and in

the sweet waning light the pretty face looks pale and earnest.

"I would not like to live many years," the girl goes on. "It must be such a cruel thing to watch one's friends dropping away one by one, until in all the world you stand alone. I would rather go first!"

"Then you would care nothing for the grief of those you left behind?" he asks, in a low voice. "Isn't there a grain of selfishness in your wish?"

"Perhaps!" shaking herself vigorously; "but suppose we change the subject. I cannot remember how I came to introduce it. Look at this clematis, and tell me if ever you have seen its equal?"

Harry Lothian makes some suitable response, but he seems best to like looking into the sweet, small face, which every change renders but the more attractive; to gaze into the depths of those deep grey eyes, and surely there never was sweeter music than Nancy's voice!

In some way they have reached the garden-wall, and the girl has taken up her favourite position—elbow-resting on the wall, and her dimpled chin in her hollowed palm.

Harry leans beside her, and for a little while both are silent, for the beauty and sweetness of the summer night are upon them. Loud tones, gay laughter would now seem profane.

Then the young fellow says,—

"How good it is to be here! I wish this hour would never go! I think I never realised until now how lovely the old village is!"

"You have been so long away that you are a stranger to your own. Oh, the scent of the new-mown hay! Would not you like to be down there in the meadows?"

"Yes! Won't you come, Nancy? The distance is nothing, and it is early yet. Do come?"

She needs no further urging.

"Dad is still intent upon his beloved chess, and we shall not be missed, so long as I am home in time to sing him to sleep!"

"He actually sleeps whilst you sing?" says Harry, as though aghast at the thought.

"What awful taste! You won't send me away until I, too, have heard you?"

"You may stay if you wish!" for Nancy is not shy in such matters, and she is well aware that she possessed a splendid voice. A little thrill of pleasure stirs her as she thinks that Harry will hear her to-night, and will be compelled to admit one might visit a worse place than Kestevan Hall.

Down in the meadows he gathers her a profusion of wild flowers, sweet and frail-clematis, and meadow-sweet, clover, and Plantagenet.

"I can find no roses!" he said, ruefully.

"Of course not," retorts country-bred Nancy. "They had their day and are not, dog-roses don't blossom in July! Oh, please gather no more; my hands are full now, and I think we must be returning," this with a regretful sigh.

"Stay awhile, we have been here so short a time," he urges; but the girl is obdurate, and together they turn their faces homewards. The moon is well up now, and the sky is so bright, so clear, one is tempted to believe that night has not yet come.

Harry, glancing down at the swift, small feet, leading the way, sees that the hem of the thin garment clinging about them is soaked with dew.

"How thoughtless I have been!" he says. "You are so wet! I ought not to have taken you into the meadows," and then he drops on his knees and wrings out the moisture, whilst Nancy, blushing a great deal, and laughing a little, expostulates with him, declaring she is very strong, and will take no harm; and when at last he rises she gives him a charming smile and sweetest words of thanks, promising him a reward in the shape of a song.

"But," he says, anxiously, "you must get that wet thing off as soon as possible."

"Nonsense! I shall take no harm. I never

do, and I am not going to alarm dad and Lillias about a trifle. You see, Mr. Lothian, you are only accustomed to the society of fashionable people. You haven't the slightest idea how strong and active we unpolished folks are! Oh, there is Chummy looking for us—that means dad has won the game, and is ready for music. Well, Chummy, I've been walking!"

"So I see, miss," grimly. "The fashion has changed a lot since your mamma came here a bride. Young ladies never thought then of wandering unattended, especially at night."

"Chummy, what has displeased you?" says Nancy, lightly. "Try and remember Mr. Lothian is a very efficient escort."

"Ladies in your position," remarks the old man, sententiously, "never should go unattended by—by—"

"By a duenna," laughs Nancy, passing him by. "I will bear that in mind for the future," and then she has entered the drawing-room, and casting her spoils upon a table, says,—

"Have I kept you waiting, dad? I hope not. Lillias, my dear, I want you to play for me, Lillias does not sing. I have promised Mr. Lothian some music."

So long as he lives Harry will remember this one night! Every slight adjunct to the scene, each scent or sound, will be impressed upon heart and brain for ever. The great shabby room, with the old-fashioned piano, the faint, uncertain light, the almost ghostly figures of the two girls—for no candles have been brought in! And always, until sense and life fail him, he will hear the music of that voice, peaking upwards and onwards; will remember the words she sang, and pray in his soul for forgetfulness of all these things.

Mr. Kestevan falls asleep in the old, accustomed way; and Lillias, who adores music, strikes the opening chords of "Auld Robin Gray," then lets her fingers drop idly from the keys, unconscious of everything but the music of her sister's voice; neither does Nancy notice the absence of any accompaniment as she sings,—

"When the sheep are in the fauld, and all the kye at bame,

And all the weary world to rest is gane,
Then the waes o' my heart fall in showers from my e'e,

While my gudeman sleeps sound by me."

She sings with such passionate abandonment, that the listening Chummy furtively wipes away a tear, and Harry is more moved than he would care to tell; and when the sweet old ballad ends, he says, under his breath, "go on;" and unhesitatingly she obeys:—

"I have lived and I have loved,
Have lived and loved in vain;
Some joys and many woes have proved,
That may not be again!
My heart is cold, my eye is sore,
Joy wins no smile, and grief no tear.

Fain would I hope, if hope I could,
If sure to be deceived,
There's comfort in a thought of good,
Tho' 'tis not quite believed;
For sweet is hopes wild warbled air,
But oh! its echo is despair."

Mr. Kestevan wakes with a start as the last note dies out,—

"Eh? Oh, yes, my dear, very nice, very nice indeed," he says; but Lillias utters no word. Sometimes the passion in her sister's voice when she sings frightens her; and Harry says, half reproachfully,—

"Why do you choose such sad songs, you whose life has been all brightness?"

"I don't know," she answers, in the same low tone as he has used. "Sometimes I think my life will have a tragic ending."

"Heaven forbid!" he whispers, fervently, and claps her hand warmly within his own; then good-nights are spoken, and very reluctantly Harry Lothian turns his back on Kes-

tevan Hall. "I must not go there often," he says to himself, "that girl bewitches me. What an original she is, and each succeeding mood seems lovelier than the last!"

"A nice, honest young fellow," is Mr. Kestevan's verdict, as the door closes upon his guest. "He will be quite an addition to Rickworth society. I hope we shall see him often."

"I like him immensely," announces Lillias, with the frankness which distinguishes the Kestevan family, but Nancy only yawns and says nothing.

But it is a noteworthy fact that to-night she lies long hours unvisited by sleep, with her brain full of thoughts of Harry Lothian; and for the first time since she was promoted to long frocks she forgets all about Prince Charming and the wonderful revolution he is to accomplish in all things connected with the Kestevans.

CHAPTER III.

"NANCY, don't you think it strange Lady Lothian has not called upon us yet?" asks Lillias, a fortnight later.

"Oh, I don't know," petulantly. "I've no doubt we are the gainers by her forgetfulness!"

"Is it forgetfulness? It seems more like studied insult to me; and, of course, she is aware that Harry is frequently—I may say daily—here. Should we receive him if his mother ignores us? That is the question, my dear."

"Children are not answerable for their parents' vagaries," says Nancy, with supreme indifference; "but settle the question as you please."

"Well, I wouldn't care to offend Harry, I like him so well, and it is pleasant to hear something of the outside world."

"Of course," interrupts Nancy, brusquely, "and Harry's friend, Mr. Rochdale, is so palpably your admirer."

Lillias moves further into the shadow as she answers,—

"Mr. Rochdale has nothing to do with the matter, and really your remark was not in good taste."

Nancy gives vent to a harsh little laugh. "I never was famous for that article. Do as you please, Lil, but don't trouble me any further. I always leave all knotty points to you."

"But, Nance, I was thinking of you most, dear. Do you suppose I am blind to Harry's devotion to you? He isn't rich, you are penniless, and I am quite sure the Lothians would object to such a match. Nancy, dear, you are certain you do not—do not care for him too much?"

"Quite certain," says Nancy, stontly; but, oh, how thankful she is that the gathering dusk hides the guilty blush upon her cheek. "Do you fancy I am a very susceptible young person, or that I would throw the handkerchief to the first man who was civil to me?"

She moves to the window as she speaks, and looks out.

"Rain! rain! rain!" she says, "it has never ceased falling all day, and a wet day in July is simply awful. How early dark it is, and there goes papa's bell! Prepare, my dear, for the inevitable chess."

"But you are coming too?"

"Indeed I am not. I prefer staying here and meditating upon my shortcomings. Call me when the game is ended."

Lillias being gone she stands by the window still, her brow pressed against the cold glass.

"What has come to me?" she thinks. "Why am I always so restless and dissatisfied? And, oh! why has this day been so long?"

Her face droops lower, and all her heart is shaken with the thought, "Is it because he has not come? Do I love him? Do I love him?" and the burning side of colour flames over her throat and cheek. "It cannot, it

must not be. Shall I give my heart unasked?"

Then with a sudden access of impatience, which only recently has marked her manner, she snatches up her hat and hurries out, regardless alike of rain and cold.

The long grass catches and stays her feet, the brambles pluck and tear at her flimsy gown as almost unconsciously she makes her way to the front gate. It is of iron, such as remains of it, and overhung by a very bower of clematis and jasmine.

Under this bower stands Nancy. The position commands a perfect view of Lothian Manor, and as her tired eyes rest upon it she forgets all the discomfort of the gathering night, the pitiless drip drip of the rain upon her face and shoulders, remembers nothing but her need of Harry and the jealous pain at her heart.

Slowly, slowly her face droops upon her clasped hands.

"I wish that he would come!" she breathes.

"I wish that he were here!"

Drip! drip! drip! The loose tresses about her throat and cheek are wet with the rain and dew, and her dress is all but sodden.

But still she stands there, conscious only of the new cruel restlessness that has fallen upon her. She does not hear the sound of approaching steps, or see a dark figure looming out through the mist, and starts with a little cry when a voice says,—

"Nancy! what are you doing here?"

She lifts her head, and laughs hysterically, with a sudden sense of rapture.

"It was dull in the house, and I was tired of my own society."

"And so came out ostensibly in search of rheumatism? Why, child, you are quite wet!"

"I shall take no harm. Let me stay a little while. You have no idea how dull it has been to-day!"

As she lifts her face, shining with happiness now, and he sees the innocent delight in her eyes, the young fellow, forgetting all but her beauty and his love, casts prudence to the wind, and leaning nearer, asks passionately,—

"Have you missed me, darling?" and so puts an arm about the trembling form. "All day I have tried to see you, but failed. To-night I could not rest without an effort to get a word with you. Nancy, my little, sweet Nancy, I love you, I love you!"

She lies quite passive in his arms, dumb and faint with the great joy that has come to her, not realising yet the full blessedness of the knowledge that Harry loves her, and is her very own.

But when he kisses her, reiterating his passion again and again, pleading for some kind word, she stirs slightly, and lifting her head from his shoulder, says solemnly,—

"I do love you, Harry, and I shall love you until I die!"

Why does she speak of death now, the young, strong maiden safe in her lover's arms, full of hope for the future? Is there a voice that murmurs to her, "These good gifts are not for you. This hour is your own. Drink deep of the joy it gives."

There follows a long, long blissful pause after Nancy's one fervent speech. Then she asks very softly,—

"Harry, will Lady Lothian be very angry?"

"I am my own master," he answers, quickly, "and shall please myself. There, don't look so distressed, dear heart! She may be vexed at first, but when she knows you as you are she will be proud and fond of you. And as you are aware, her will is my father's law."

But in his heart he rather dreads breaking the news of his engagement to his mother.

Presently, Nancy, having grown calmer, lifts solemn eyes to his.

"You never loved anyone but me, Harry?"

"Never, sweetheart."

"And you never will? It isn't true that you once cared for the lady staying at the Manor, Miss Crespiigny?"

"It is utterly false. Nancy, can't you trust me? It is true my people wished the match to take place, because Lalage is a great heiress; but I choose for myself. You are not jealous?"

Nancy stirs restlessly.

"Perhaps I am. She is so beautiful, and has so many advantages. Oh, Harry, if you fail me I—I shall break my heart. I ought not to tell you this. You will not value so much what you have so easily won; but—but I have always been used to saying what is in my mind, and I cannot change all at once."

"I would not have you changed in anything, unless, indeed, I would have you forget your causeless jealousy."

"But she will see you every day, and I—oh, Harry! it would have been better for us never to have met."

"Hush! hush! You shall not distress yourself for such a trifle. Nancy, my darling, I promise everything that you wish altered shall be altered. With all my soul I swear to be true to you, to love you first and last, now and always. You do believe me; you are content?" and the look she turns upon him is more than sufficient reply.

"Come, little woman, I must take you back to the house. You are so pitifully wet, and I can't let my property run any risk. Tomorrow I shall see Mr. Kestevan. I wonder what he will say? Darling! darling! there is a glorious future before us."

"Yes," the girl answers, her eyes shining through happy tears. "Oh, Harry! I will try to make myself worthier of you; and, perhaps, when Lady Lothian sees how dearly I love you, she will not be so very sorry you did not choose Lalage. No, please don't come in. I would rather go alone, I don't want Chummy to scold me on this happy night."

So he gathers her close to his breast and kisses her, whilst the white arms steal about his neck, and the innocent cheek is pressed to his. Then saying, "Heaven bless you! Heaven have you always in its keeping," she slips from his embrace and glides unseen into the house, and up to the room she shares with her sister. Lillias is already there, and as Nancy enters she turns quickly,—

"Why, Nance! where have you been? How wet you are! And, oh! what has happened?"

The small face is instinct with solemn happiness.

"Oh, Lillias, be glad with me. There is no girl under the sun so blessed as I; and then, with a throb of fear, the other guesses all the truth; and her first thought is how will the Lothians receive the news of their son's engagement; her second, is Harry strong enough to resist their remonstrances and entreaties? But not for worlds will she shadow this first hour of Nancy's joy; so she draws the girl gently near her, and kissing her says,—

"Harry has told you what I have long guessed, Nancy. Darling Nancy, may you be as happy all your life long as now you are!" and although she is grieved to the heart because no longer is she first and dearest to her sister, she gives no sign of this.

Whatever their faults, no one can justly accuse the Kestevan girls of selfishness.

Nancy sleeps little to-night, all her mind, all her soul is so filled with thankfulness for this great and blessed boon which has been granted her; and she lies, with wide-open, dewy eyes dreaming of the future, which is to be so bright, beingspent wholly with and for Harry.

Even Mr. Kestevan, unobservant as he usually is, notices the peculiar brightness on his favourite child's face, and laughingly says—

"Why, Nance, you look like a lucky legatee."

She blushes slightly, but answers with her usual sanctimony,—

"Perhaps I have come into a fortune. I was born lucky, you know, and that is far better than being born rich!"

And breakfast being ended she goes to her

favourite seat in the garden, unmolested by Lillias, who has great sympathy with her sister's little love story. And towards noon Harry arrives, asking for Mr. Kestevan.

With much confusion the young man tells his tale, and Mr. Kestevan listens with grave face and serious eyes.

"I am sorry, very sorry, that this should have happened," he says. "I had no idea of it, or I think I should have forbidden your visits. I never thought until now how frequent they were. What do you suppose your parents will say to this affair?"

"I am afraid there'll be an awful row, sir!"

"You are not far wrong!" dryly; "And see here, you have been frank with me, let me treat you with the same candour. Personally, I like you well, my boy, and should be glad to enrol you as a member of the family; but my little girl will be quite penniless, and so I agree to the engagement only conditionally. If your people refuse to accept her as their daughter and their equal, you must understand, once and for all, that Nancy will never be your wife. I will have no underhand work, no secret meetings. I trust to your honour as a gentleman to engage in none of these. Further, I will not permit any meeting between yourself and Nancy until Lord Lothian has been made acquainted with the true state of affairs. You understand?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly; and I think you are a little hard on me!"

"I have my daughters' happiness to consider!" gravely. "I should be glad indeed to see them well settled. They are good girls, and deserve good partners; for when I am gone there will be nothing for them save what this place fetches, and the one thousand pounds' insurance on my life. My boy, I would rather give Nancy a little pain now than work out whole years of misery for her."

A little pain! Ah, Heaven! how faintly they guessed all the latent strength of character, all the depth of passion of which this poor child was capable.

Harry's face flashed hotly.

"Mr. Kestevan," he says, "do you think either Nancy or I would find it easy to forget each other, or that a 'little misery' would be the only result of our parting? I will see the governor at once; but I warn you that whatever his reply may be I shall not give up Nancy; and I can trust her to remain faithful until a time comes when I can claim her as my wife."

"Poor lad!" Mr. Kestevan says, sadly. "What can you do? and what becomes of all the bright hopes of youth—all its fair promise? There! I will not bid you look on the dark side; but rather say, do not hope for too much good; and if Lord Lothian proves obstinate I shall know how to guard my child."

"You will not let me see her?"

"Certainly not. I acknowledge no engagement until it is ratified by the other side. You have no claim upon Nancy—no right to expect or demand an interview. But because I like you, and the little lass cares for you, I will explain everything to her."

"With that I must be content; but I shall return to-day triumphant."

"I hope so!"

And then when he is gone Mr. Kestevan sends for Nancy.

"Harry Lothian has been here. You know what he had to tell me?"

"Yes, papa," is the answer in the meekest and demurest of tones, and for the life of her she cannot lift her eyes to the kind ones above.

But her father's hand is outstretched to meet hers, that goes out so trustfully to return his clasp; and then he tells her all that has passed between her lover and himself, and exhorts her, if things should not go as he hopes and prays they will, to exert her strength of will to forget Harry and this little episode in her life. Then she looks at him with wide and wondering eyes.

"Father," she says, "do women ever forget

their first and best love? I never shall. I—I—oh, daddy! oh, daddy! I never can break my promise to Harry. I never can give him back his word until he asks it of me."

She looks so like her mother in her distress—so like the fair young creature who, years ago, had left all for his sake, and had come to him weeping sorely because love and duty had warred within her breast, and she had chosen love for his sake; that all the worldly maxims he had been about to preach die on his lips, and he can only smooth the lovely hair, and whisper words of hope and gladness.

CHAPTER IV.

How much Harry Lothian dreads that interview with his father none but he himself could tell; but there is no shirking it, even if he would. Everything must be settled, and settled satisfactorily, before he can see Nancy again, and just now there is nothing he desires so much.

He finds Lord Lothian in his own particular room, and certainly he did not exaggerate when he said his confession "would bring about an awful row."

The elder man storms and raves at Harry, hurls so many unjust epithets on his luckless fiancée that the son retorts vigorously, and when their dispute is at its highest Lady Lothian sails in.

Then the story has to be retold, and just a moment Harry thinks, by his mother's expression, that she will array herself on her husband's side; the next he is relieved and grateful to her, for she says quite quietly,—

"Of course this is a great surprise to us, and not a very pleasant one. You know our wishes, and naturally your father is disappointed; but family quarrels are so excessively vulgar. Leave the matter to me, and I hope that I shall be able to make terms for you."

He is only too glad to escape; and the door having closed upon him, Lord Lothian turns to his wife with an angry,—

"What the dickens is your move, Selina? I confess I can't see it; and you need not suppose that any persuasions of yours will induce me to consent to my son's pauperism."

"I supposed nothing so foolish. I am as aware as you that Harry cannot afford to marry a penniless girl, however blue her blood may be. But open opposition to his wishes will only precipitate the climax you and I must prevent."

"Go on!" says his lordship.

He has a firm belief in his wife's wisdom and astuteness, and not without cause. She had steered him through many difficulties, brought about by his own folly and extravagance; glossed over many an unseemly quarrel of his with this or that acquaintance—for Lord Lothian is utterly devoid of gentlemanly instincts, coarse in mind and manner, a veritable boor. Indeed, nothing but his title induced Lady Lothian, the heiress of a rich American huckster, to accept him, and she had her reward; for under his skilful manipulation her riches took wings to themselves, and nothing now remains to them save the income derived from the somewhat impoverished Scottish estates.

"Go on!" says his lordship again, as the lady sits looking thoughtfully before her.

"Let me know your tactics. I will say, Selina, you have a wonderful brain for a woman!"

"Thank you," mockingly. "Such a compliment, coming from you, is doubly acceptable. But a truce to flatteries, and let us come to business. If Harry is thwarted, he and the girl will doubtless find some means, to outwit us, and the first thing you will hear is that they are married. Lothian, you have no sense. Now, I propose that we should apparently yield to his wishes; further, that I at once visit the girl, and invite her here for an indefinite period."

"What! Why, woman, you are mad? I

won't countenance such folly. Do you hear? I am not quite in my dotage yet."

"That is an open question; and I shall be obliged if you will hear me out, before jumping at conclusions. These Kestevans are so horribly poor and so stupidly honest they can't even make a decent appearance. I noticed how shabby they were last Sunday at church. Well, we've a smart lot of people here, and the contrast between them and his pauper sweetheart will be too much for Harry's constancy. He cannot bear to play second to any man's first, and his fear of ridicule is his weak point. I know how to use that to our advantage."

"But Lalage Crespiigny won't stand too much of his nonsense. As soon as she knows of the engagement she'll be off."

"Leave her to me. I understand how to manage her. Don't you see that she'll be more than ever bent on winning Harry. She will be, as you say, 'on her mettle.' Then, too, she is aware that he must succeed to the title."

"And Americans are so deucedly fond of a handle to a name."

"Not more so than the English nobility are of the mighty dollar!" sneers her ladyship, with some truth. "There, leave the matter to me—you have no talent for intrigue. And see here, Lothian, I bet you five pounds that I oute Harry of his infatuation in less than three months."

"You're a clever woman, Selina, but I think you over estimate your powers; still, make it twenty pounds, and I'll take you."

"Let it be twenty, then, but don't forget to settle with me. It's a debt of honour, you know!" and with a backward smile at him she goes to seek her son.

She easily finds him, and joining him says,—

"Harry, you ought to be eternally grateful to me; for, setting aside my own wishes and prejudices, I have used my utmost powers of persuasion on your behalf. And in a measure I have succeeded."

"Mother! this is good of you. I hardly expected you would be my ally."

"Probably not; because I am not given to effusion, you imagine I have no feeling. Well, sit down. You look so gigantic standing! Ah! that is better. Now, of course, you wish to know the result of my efforts."

"Naturally."

"I have gained your father's permission to visit Miss Kestevan—what a pity her Christian name is so plebeian!—and, further, I am to invite her here, to stay as long as she pleases, that we may become the better acquainted. But your engagement is not to be announced until each has had time to feel sure of the other's affection. And I am certain you will consider this a reasonable and natural stipulation, because your acquaintance is as yet only a fortnight old!"

"We have known each other all our lives."

"You silly boy. It is eight years since you met! She was only a child then. She is a mere slip of a girl now, and scarcely capable of knowing her own mind. There, don't look so ferocious. I am quite prepared to like your little sweetheart very much, and I am going to dress for my visit now. It is rather late, but I don't intend to stand on ceremony with Nancy."

Harry turns to her,—

"Thank you, mother, a thousand times," he says, and somewhat to her dismay kisses her upon the cheek. The Lothians are neither an affectionate nor demonstrative family as a rule, but she laughs a little affected laugh,—

"Am I to convey that kiss to Nancy? She will think me a poor substitute for you. Ta, ta, Harry! Go and make peace with your father!"

An hour later, Lady Lothian, exquisitely dressed, with complexion artificially beautified, and eyes made lustrous by a free and dangerous use of belladonna, steps into her elegant brougham, and is driven to Kestevan

Manor, where she is first interviewed by Mr. Kestevan.

Her artificiality strikes him painfully; and without any apparent reason he distrusts her protestations of admiration and affection for Nancy. Yet when she begs to see the girl he cannot refuse, and neither does he feel himself in a position to decline her invitation, couched in such gracious terms.

Nancy comes in, flushed and shy, and terribly conscious of her own shabbiness, but Lady Lothian places her at her ease at once.

"My dear child!" she says effusively, "what is this Harry tells me? I hardly could believe his story; but these ingenuous blushes convince me he spoke nothing but the truth. Gracious powers! what a child you are—what a pretty child! I really am quite ready to forgive Harry his imprudence! Had I been a young man I should have carried you off by main force. Mr. Kestevan, I suppose it is of no use to oppose these babies?"

"I suppose not," grimly. "Nancy, you will, of course be glad to hear your engagement is sanctioned by Lord and Lady Lothian; but as you are both so young they think it advisable not to publish the news at present."

"And as it is necessary we should know each other well, I wish you to come to us as soon as possible, for a nice long visit. You can drive over nearly every day to see your father and Miss Kestevan."

Instead of thanking her ladyship for her kindness, Nancy glances appealingly at her father, and he, guessing the cause of her distress, comes at once to the rescue.

"Lady Lothian, I hope you understand that Nancy is really portionless; also that I am wholly unable to give her those thousand and one trifles the fashionable lady thinks necessary. If she comes to the Manor she must be received for what she is, and not what she has."

"Mr. Kestevan," reproachfully, "were she without a friend in the world she would find one in me. I do not judge by external show. When will you be ready to come, dear child? Let me see, this is Wednesday! Suppose I arrange to call for you on Saturday, about two? Thank you, that will suit admirably, and now I must go. You shall introduce me to your sister when I call again. Good-bye, dear! Mind you do not disappoint me. Mr. Kestevan, *au revoir*," and so, bowing and smiling, she returns to her carriage, and is whirled away.

"Well, Nancy," says her father, "what is your opinion of your future mamma-in-law?" "She was very kind," doubtfully, "but—is she quite true?"

"I am afraid not! Ah! little girl, little girl! Why could you not be content to live the old life? There, it was foolish to hope to keep you long; but oh, my dear, may you be always as happy as we have been together in our poverty."

He lays his hands a moment on her head as though in blessing, and when he leaves her standing alone in the room her eyes are full of tears.

Can ever any one be kinder or more loving to her than this dear father, who for years has been father and mother too, to her and Lillias?

She covers her pretty eyes with her hands, and something like a sob breaks from her, as she remembers all his goodness and unselfishness; but she is not crying when Lillias joins her.

In some way, by some unknown means, Mr. Kestevan contrives to purchase a pretty gray costume for her before the eventful day arrives, and with her white muslin freshly starched, and a holland gown of ancient date, Nancy has to be content.

At the promised time Lady Lothian drives to Kestevan Hall; and Nancy, running down flushed and excited, meets Chummy outside the breakfast-room.

"So you're really going to leave us, Miss Nancy?"

"For a little while only. I shall soon return. Good-bye, Chummy!"

The old man eyes her severely.

"You're going for ill, and not for good!" he says, grimly. "A Kestevan shouldn't take favours from an American nobody. Mark my words, Miss Nancy, you will regret this visit as long as you live."

"You stupid, impertinent, old creature!" says Nancy, half-angry and half-laughing. "Why should I regret it? There, good-bye, and let me see a smiling face to welcome me when I come again!"

"Good-bye, means 'God be with you; don't it, missy? There, good-bye, with all my heart; but I wish all the same you weren't going!"

And in the days to come Chummy remembers his wish, and hates himself that, by fair mean or foul, he did not prevent Nancy's visit to Lothian Manor.

The first to welcome Nancy is Miss Lalage Crespiigny, the American heiress, who is supposed to be ignorant of Harry's entanglement.

She greets the stranger with marked cordiality, and when Nancy has been conveyed to her apartment, drifts, apparently without purpose, to the billiard-room, where she finds Harry alone.

"Dear Mr. Lothian," she says, in her soft, wooing way. "I have had the greatest surprise and pleasure imaginable. I did not think England could produce such a lovely creature as the girl Lady Lothian has just introduced to me as Miss Kestevan. Do you know her? Who are her people? And what a terrible shame it is she should go so shabby!"

Harry flushes hotly, but answers with tolerable calmness,—

"I thought my mother would have told you all. Miss Kestevan is my promised wife, although as yet our engagement is not to be made public. Her family is as old as the hills," and as Mrs. Rounswell of "Beak House," would have it, "quite as respectable."

"Oh, thank you so much for the confidence you have reposed in me. I am so gratified to be the first admitted to your secret; and with all my heart I congratulate you. I shall cultivate Miss Kestevan, not only for her own sake, but yours."

Then with a nod and a charming smile she goes away to make an elaborate and exquisite toilet.

Several people are gathered in the drawing-room; but neither Harry nor Nancy are present, as Lalage is careful to ascertain. The American heiress is much sought after, her wealth not being her least charm, and two or three gentlemen join her at once, plying her with foolish flatteries, which she is quite keen enough to value according to their worth.

"Ah!" she says, with a coquettish smile, turning her dark eyes upon the last speaker, "you vow all manner of pretty things now, in the prettiest of ways, but I quite expect you will desert me in a body when you have seen Lady Lothian's latest importation. She is just the loveliest little thing!"

"Bah, Jove! you wrong us," draws one man; "but who is she?"

"I am half inclined not to tell, but as by nature I am merciful—"

"You will not refuse your information? Don't keep us in suspense."

"Well, gentlemen, imagine the loveliest face you have ever seen, surrounded by masses of chestnut hair, and lit by a pair of gray eyes—

'Deeper than the depths
Of waters stilled at even,'

and you have before you Miss Nancy Kestevan!"

"Old Kestevan's daughter? Didn't know he had one."

"He has two, and rumour says Miss Nancy is the least lovely of the pair. Really, had I known I should meet such a formidable rival I would have flown from Ricksworth whilst I

could do so gracefully. As it is, I must rely upon my 'silks and satins fine' to equalise our chances. For, oh! the dear little soul is so wofully shabby, and I can assure you her gown was old fashioned long before Mrs. Noah entered the ark!"

"Gad! how awful!" draws a young exquisite. "You—er—positively make me shudder!"

CHAPTER V.

NANCY is not happy in her new surroundings. Her companions are not congenial spirits, and, try as she will, she cannot feel any affection or esteem for Lady Lothian.

Some of the men are very kind to her, thereby exciting Harry's jealousy, but those of the "masher type" are careful to avoid this shabby, outspoken young lady; whilst of her own sex there is not one, save Lalage, who does not show, by glance or half-suppressed smile, the utter contempt in which they hold one who is apparently content to go clad more meanly than many a maid-of-all-work.

She sees very little of Harry save in the society of others, and then he is often irritable, and she longs with all her heart to be at the Hall again, with Harry hovering about her, and not a soul to spy or comment upon their growing love.

As for the young fellow, he had never cared in the least what his little sweetheart wore whilst she remained with her family, but now it is all different; and contrasting her poor attire with the bright plumage of the other dainty birds, he feels personally aggrieved.

"Surely Kestevan should have made an effort to give her a decent wardrobe!" he thinks, savagely; and as though to intensify his displeasure, he hears two men below his window discussing the same subject.

"That little Kestevan now, she would be simply exquisite if she dressed like any other girl! What the deuce are her people about to let her loose on society, dressed like an ante-diluvian pauper!"

"Bah Jove! it's giving the girl no chance of changing her state," draws the other. "Fawncy escorting such a dowdy to theatre or park? Really—er—the idea is too monstrous!"

"Someone—Reckdale, I think—almost hinted Lothian was all but engaged to her. Is it true, do you think?"

"Gad, no! He wouldn't be such a fool. Why—er—the girl hasn't a cent to call her own—beastly poor; and Lothian isn't quite a millionaire—d'ye see?"

Harry rises quickly. For the first time he is not quite satisfied with things as they are. Not that he loves Nancy less—oh, no, no, that will never be; but he feels that her poverty and her "dowdiness" are really reflections upon his good sense and taste, and he would give much to have these things altered. Hardly knowing what he hopes, he goes to Lady Lothian.

"Mother, I want your help."

"In what, dear boy?" she asks, with newborn suavity, which, in those who understand her best, would rouse suspicions of her truth and kindness. "Are you in any financial difficulty?"

"No, it isn't that—but—but mother, don't you think Nancy doesn't look quite like the other girls?—that—oh, confound it all! I hate to say it; but isn't she awfully shabby?"

"Of course she is," cheerfully; "but I don't think she cares about it, she is so used to it; poor child, and it can't be remedied—at least, not now, not yet."

"I've been thinking," Harry says hesitatingly, "that perhaps you could supply the deficiencies of her wardrobe. I promise faithfully to repay you for all your expenditure."

Lady Lothian lifts her hands in pious horror. "Oh, Harry! I haven't attempt it. You have no idea how furiously independent the child is. If I presumed to act as you wish she would be indignant and insulted."

"Then she ought not to be!" angrily. "She owes something to me."

"Of course; but then she is so young, and has been reared in such an old-fashioned way, that she hardly understands yet what is expected of one in the position she is so soon to occupy. You must be patient, Harry; she is only a child!"

"But she will have to learn that my will is law," he retorts masterfully, "and she cannot begin too soon;" and Lalage entering at this moment he effects a hasty exit.

"Well," says the beauty, with lifted brows, "what ails the Sultan?"

Oh! laughs the other, "I have succeeded in inserting the thin edge of the wedge! Harry is not quite so delighted with his *fiancée* as when first she came."

Lalage's heart beats fast and furiously beneath her bodice, but she says with admirable calmness,—

"In what way has she displeased him?"

"Oh! they've not quarrelled to my knowledge yet, but he has already discovered that her appearance does not do him credit. You may rest assured that marriage will never take place. I know my son, and how to make him dance to my piping. If his lordship had acted upon his own responsibility, there would have been a stolen marriage, and a horrid scandal."

"You're a clever woman," Lalage says admiringly. "You ought to succeed."

"And I shall! I never think of failure. When you are Harry's wife you must not forget the good services I have done for you; and listen to a word of advice from one who has paid dearly for her experience. If you must have a title, if nothing less than being my lady will content you, be careful to secure your fortune to yourself before taking that last fatal step."

"Thanks for your warning. I shall not forget it. But, really, do you know I feel a wee bit sorry for that simple little soul. If she had not poached on my preserves I would have given her some substantial help; but I cannot fight against my own interests."

"You would be mad to do so!" and then the subject drops; but Lalage says to herself,

"She is a clever woman, but she is not a generous one. If ever I am Harry's wife I will not dole out my largesse with a niggardly hand. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! take all. So that you love me I shall be content. I shall ask for nothing more."

Meanwhile, the object of her apostrophe has rushed into the grounds, angry with himself, with Nancy, and all the world. And lo! there is Nancy amongst the trees, romping like the veriest child, in company with a little rough black terrier. Her hair is loose about her throat and face, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes bright with fun. There is a great rent in the short holland skirt, but of this she is blissfully unaware.

Seeing Harry she runs to him with a low, glad cry,—

"Oh, how nice of you to find me out! What a good half-hour we will have, for everybody but Trip and I are in the house!" Then she pauses, looking wistfully into the handsome, irresolute face. "What have I done?" she says, and all the brightness dies out of her voice. "Are you angry with me? Somehow, I never seem to please you now."

"I wish," he answers, crossly, "you would remember you are an engaged girl, and not a child. What do you suppose folks would say if they had seen you two seconds ago?"

"I really neither know nor care," says Nancy, promptly.

She has a high spirit of her own, and at times is quick to show it, and Harry's tone displeases her.

"You ought to do both," severely; "and, for Heaven's sake, don't let anyone see you with that rent in your dress."

"It is rather large!" Nancy says, coolly, seeing it now for the first time, "but needle and cotton will soon remedy that!"

"I wish—I wish," hesitatingly, "that you would try to look and comport yourself more

like the other girls. Did you ever see Lalage Crespiigny untidy?"

"No, because she has a maid, and she is never shabby, because she has an unlimited supply of money! Really, you should have chosen that pink of perfection!"

"Perhaps I should have been wiser. At all events, you have not seemed to care for me so well since you came here," manlike seeking to throw the onus of their quarrel upon her.

"I wish I had never come," the girl retorts, passionately. "I was happy at home—oh, yes! happier than I shall ever be again. Here, everyone looks down upon me; and you!—you are ashamed of me!" and then, poor child, she breaks down, sobbing piteously, "I will go away, and not trouble you any more; and you will soon forget me and be happy," and with this she turns to go.

"Nancy," cries the now penitent lover, almost beside himself with shame and contrition. "Nancy, you must not leave me in anger. Dear heart, I love you with all my soul! Stay—oh, yes, you shall stay until you have forgiven me. I was a brute to speak to you as I did, but something—no matter what now—had gone wrong with me, and I was ready to vent my passion on the first soul I met. Don't sob like that, sweetheart; but promise to pardon me, and I will never offend in like manner again."

He has her close in his arms now, and is kissing her wildly, and she, poor child, is as quick to relent as she is to take offence! So she smiles at him through her tears, loads herself with unkind epithets, and pardons him freely. But she does not appear to-day at dinner, and Lalage devotes herself to Harry's amusement.

Unfortunately this little quarrel is but a facsimile of countless others; and poor Nancy, growing afraid of invoking her lover's wrath, becomes constrained and unnatural in her manner, so that Harry sometimes has the delight of hearing her called a pretty idiot. Both are glad when her visit ends. "Away from all these people Harry will be his old self," the girl thinks, and to himself young Lothian remarks,—

"Thank Heaven, the ordeal is over, and I'll never undergo another like it. When next Nancy comes to us again it must be as my wife; and I shall represent matters pretty forcibly to old Kesteven. He ought to be ashamed of himself for subjecting her to unkind remarks. The dear little soul hasn't a decent gown in her possession!"

The Lothians are going north, carrying Lalage with them.

"But," says her ladyship, "we shall expect you to spend Christmas with us, dear Nancy; and then, of course, your engagement must be announced. Good-bye; I'll take every care of Harry, and promise you he shall not carry his flirtations to any dangerous extremes!"

"Good-bye," says Nancy, with a queer little thrill of pain in her heart, "and thank you for your hospitality," and she offers a cold cheek to be kissed. To Lalage her manner is warmer. "You will write me sometimes, Miss Crespiigny! You have been very kind to me, and I should like to think you would not quite forget me."

"There is small fear that I should do so dear! Farewell! See, Mr. Lothian is waiting to take you down!"

"I shall come over to-night," whispers Harry, as he hands her into the carriage. "Be sure to meet me at the gate. Our good times are coming back, darling! I shall be a far nicer-tempered fellow when I have you all to myself. You are so pretty, and I am such a jealous beggar, I never shall be content until I know you are irrevocably mine!" and those words carry comfort to the heart which has long been sore, and she goes on her way rejoicing.

Old Chumney is waiting for her at the hall door, which he throws open with a grand flourish for the benefit of Lady Lothian's

supercilious servants; but no sooner is the girl well in the house than he says,—

"Well, miss, it appears to me your holiday has done you a sight more harm than good! Where are your roses gone, and what's come to you that you are so quiet?"

"Oh, you old stupid, what an imagination you have!" and she dashes by him to the advancing Lillias. "Dear old lady! how good it is to see you! How heavenly, to be home again! Oh, yes, they have all been very kind to me, but I am happier with you and dad! Where is dad? Why don't he come to meet me?"

"Dad is here!" and at the sound of that beloved voice she turns and flings herself upon his breast, crying a little for very joy, hanging about him with passionate affection.

"Then you are not sorry to return, lassie?"

"No, no; most glad, oh! most glad!"

"And your visit has not made you discontented with your own poor surroundings?"

"There is no place like home, daddy. Why do you look at me so earnestly? Do you see any change in me?"

"Yes, you left us a mere child. You have returned a woman, and I am wondering what has worked the change!"

"I've been seeing something of the outer world, you know, and have lost a little of my rustic simplicity. You ought to rejoice that it is so."

"You look as though you had learned something of sorrow!"

"Nonsense!" says Nancy, prosaically, "and oh! if you guessed how ravenous I am you would not keep me here (repeating foolish questions. Lillias, what have you for dinner?"

"Come and see," answers Lillias, laughing. "I have prepared quite a *recherché menu* in honour of your home-coming. Oh, you dear! it has been so lonely without you."

In the evening Harry presents himself, and is so lovelike in his manner that Mr. Kesteven's vague suspicions are lulled to rest, and he treats the young fellow with marked cordiality.

Nancy is very happy. Poor child, she does not guess that the glory of her life is at its zenith, and after to-day it will slowly but surely decline!

CHAPTER VI.

The Lothians have left Rickaworth three weeks, and to Nancy the time of separation seems endless. She goes about the house and grounds like one in a dream, and her snatches of song are rarely heard.

It is true she has Harry's letters to console her, and he is a voluminous writer. Three times a week a bulky epistle reaches her, three times a week she is closeted in her own room throughout the afternoon, engaged in replying to Harry's ardent vows.

But then we all know that "the written word" seems so much colder than eye or hand. Away from his little love Harry remembers only all that was bright and happy, and unless a chance word recalls her poverty and shabbiness to him, he has a happy way of forgetting these things.

Lalage Crespiigny, too, is the pleasantest of companions, and Harry's vanity is gratified when one of his friends say,—

"Am I to congratulate you, old boy? By Jove! you're a lucky fellow to be so favoured by Miss Crespiigny. She is far and away the loveliest girl out this season!"

"You are mistaken," Harry answers, smiling. "We are only friends. My mother is sort of guardian to her, you see."

The other shrugs his shoulders incredulously.

"Pooh! We all know how platonic friendships end. I shall live to see Miss Crespiigny converted into Mrs. Lothian yet!"

And Harry is too flattered to deny the soft impeachment.

That same day he has an interview with his father.

"Look here!" says the elder man, who has been well coached in his part by his wife. "Look here, it is high time things were settled, and as I have withdrawn all opposition to your marriage, I do not see why it should not at once take place. Of course, you understand, I cannot increase your allowances, that is altogether out of the question; and how two are to manage on what does not suffice for one I am at a loss to know. But if you prefer love in a cottage, well, that concerns none but yourself!"

"I couldn't marry on my allowance," Harry answers, sullenly.

"And again I say I cannot increase it; and you must remember your *fancie* has been accustomed all her life to poverty—that she is doubtless domesticated, and would make an excellent and thrifty wife. Of course you have to run the risk of her turning out a second Lady Teasle; but I maintain it is not fair to her to keep her dangling on until her youth and prettiness alike are gone. It isn't honourable!"

Harry stares with wide eyes at his father—it is something new and wonderful to hear him moralise, then he says, slowly,—

"If you'll go another hundred I'll write to Nancy to get ready."

"Impossible; and you can live very cheaply in the country. A married man of limited means cannot expect to enjoy the luxuries of his bachelor days. There say no more now on the subject, but let me know in the course of the week what you intend doing; and you may tell Miss Kestevan that your mother will supply her trousseau."

Fall of discontent, thinking himself the unluckiest of fellows, Harry goes out of his father's presence. He is utterly dejected; the prospect of a country life has no charm for him. Indeed, life would not be worth living were he to resign all those pleasures and luxuries he calls necessities. Why, to marry on his income he must put down his splendid mare, his smart dogcart. There would be no more gay little dinners at Twickenham; no more white bait at Greenwich; the theatre, too, he must forego. He shudders at the thought, for Harry is a great favourite in more than one green room, on account of his handsome face and pleasant manners.

Will his love stand such a severe trial as Lord Lothian suggested. And, as though in answer to his question, a voice from the smoking-room calls to him,—

"Lothian, come in and hear the news; Legrand has cut his throat."

"Cut his throat! Great Heavens, it can't be true!"

"But it is," as Harry joins the party. "At least, socially. He has pitched everything for the sake of a daily governess, married her, and gone to live somewhere in Devonshire, on an income of something less than three hundred!"

"Awful fool!" says another, languidly. "He'll regret it before the honeymoon's over. Bet you a pony he will."

"That's a natural sequence," says the first speaker; "and should there be children, how, in the name of all that's holy, is he to rear them? Never thought Legrand was such an ass."

As Harry hears these comments his courage dies within him. Just so will men speak of him if he marries Nancy, and how shall he bear their criticisms! Lady Lothian was right when she said he could not endure ridicule. And yet—and yet how can he give Nancy up? Love craves the sound of her voice, the sight of her face. Every honourable and manly instinct cries out to him to be true to her, but Lady Lothian, watching him, sees that he is wavering, and despises his weakness even while she rejoices in the success of her plots.

There comes a night in October, which he will remember so long as his life lasts; which he will try vainly to forget, even whilst he curses himself for his greed and weakness.

There has been an impromptu dance, and Lalage is his partner. At the close of it she lifts her flushed and perfect face to his, saying,—

"Will you think me very unconventional and daring if I ask you to take me into the grounds? It is so hot here, and we Americans are not governed by your formalities. See what a divine night it is?"

"Wrap up well and come!" and she needs no second bidding.

The night is, indeed, divine. The air is soft and balmy, the sky all fleckless and bright—and oh! what a moon shines down upon Lalage's lovely face!

"This is good," she says, and coming to a fence she leans upon it, and looks intently up at him. Her cloak has fallen a little from the white throat, and the hood slipping back reveals the dainty head, with its masses of dark hair, its flashing jewels. Undoubtedly she is very lovely, and Harry loves beauty for beauty's own sake. His heart beats a little faster as her hand touches his, and the fragrance of her robes is wafted upwards to him.

"Of what are you thinking?" she asks; "and why have you been so sad of late? Surely you may trust your trouble to me?"

"You are very kind," he answers, slowly; "but I am afraid I cannot tell it to any—"

"There is such relief in confession, and—and I cannot bear to see one I—so—so esteem harassed. Let me believe you think of me as your friend, and show me how I can help you. Will you not, Mr. Lothian—Harry?"

The last word is spoken so softly he can scarcely hear it; but he is flattered by the girl's interest in and affection for him, and his voice is just a thought too tender as he answers,—

"No one can help me. I have made a great mistake!"

"Does it—does it concern Nancy Kestevan?"

"Yes," he says, hoarsely, "that is just it; and I don't know how to remedy it. Our engagement was a folly from the beginning."

"Do you mean," asks the girl, breathlessly, "that you have found out you do not love her any more? Is there another?"

He is utterly weak, but not utterly bad, and for a moment he cannot utter so cruel a lie; but with an effort he conquers his remaining scruples.

"There is another!" and his heart cries out upon him, "Traitor! liar!" but he will not hear.

"Tell me her name?" says Lalage, and on his down-bent face he feels her warm breath, so near she is.

"Can you ask that? Don't you know it, Lalage?"

"Is it mine? Oh, Harry! oh, Harry!"

And then she is clinging about him, and he has kissed her upturned face, whilst all his soul is warring within him, and he is sick with the knowledge of all that he has lost—of the sin that he has sinned.

The woman by his side is fair; but can any other be so fair to him as his little Nancy, who shall never again run to meet him any more—whose smiles shall never again gladden his heart.

Lalage is too shrewd to believe in his sudden transformation, but she is content. "In time," she says, "he must love me best!" and does not realise now, where every other feeling is weak, his passion for Nancy can be all-enduring. He does not hear what she says, until she shakes him gently, and murmurs,—

"I may tell your mother, Harry? She has been so good to me; and—and you will break with Nancy Kestevan at once? I am very jealous. I will not share your love with any."

"She will know to-morrow," he answers; and then when he feels he can bear his agony of shame no longer, to his relief voices are heard close by, and a party of young people, tempted by the beauty of the night, join them.

Presently, in a clever way, Lalage effects

her escape without provoking any comment, and Harry sees her no more that night.

But he is perfectly conscious that Roobdale, who forms one of the house-party, watches him throughout the remainder of the night with something like suspicion, and miserably he wonders how he shall confess the black and bitter truth to the friend he most esteems, and what will that friend say to his disclosure?

He is not long left in doubt. When he retires to his own room Roobdale follows him.

"May I come in?" he asks; and Harry growls a miserable assent.

"Now, what the matter?" he says, carefully closing the door behind him. "All night you have looked like a death's-head at a feast. Have you been getting into debt again? If so, remember my purse is at your disposal."

"You are very good!" miserably; "but it isn't that. I owe next to nothing. I've been living economically since—since—"

"You and Miss Nancy were engaged? Bravo! She will make a man of you. Do you know, old boy, I've been just a little fearful of you lately. I beg your pardon. Ah! a good woman is the greatest prize a man can draw, and I hate to hear a fellow speak of the sex contemptuously. I always ask myself, 'Now, what poor girl has he wronged?' Harry, I wish you and your bonny Nancy all the good the world can give."

Every word he speaks goes like an arrow to the other's heart, and for the first time in his life he cannot meet his friend's eye; but Roobdale does not notice this as he goes on.

"I have something to tell you about myself. I left Ricksworth without saying a word of my feelings to Miss Kestevan, because I wanted to put them to the test. Marriage isn't a thing to be undertaken lightly, and Heaven forbid I should give any true woman one hour's pain. But to-morrow I am going to her—Lillias. Wish me luck, and tell me what message may I carry to Nancy?"

Then Harry can bear it no longer. With a groan that is almost a sob he brings his arms down upon the table, and hiding his face upon them, groans out,—

"Tell her I am a scoundrel and a cad, that I have broken every vow I ever made her, that I have bartered away love for gold, and that my last words are to her, 'Forget me. I dare not say forgive—'"

Roobdale has sprung to his feet.

"You heartless blackguard!" he says. "What audacity made you listen to me just now as though your sentiments were mine? What do you think that poor child will do? I tell you your brutality will be her death. Great heavens! that once I called you friend! And you would have me take this message to her? Well, I will do it—lest you, in your craven self-pity refrain from doing so, and the blow falls upon her unexpectedly. Harry Lothian, please remember that from to-night we are strangers."

"Stop!" cries the wretched young fellow. "You don't know, you can't understand, my temptations, or the pressure brought to bear upon me. Can we live on my beggarly allowance? And the governor can't or won't increase it."

"You can work!" contemptuously, "but you prefer to break a woman's heart," and slamming the door he went out, leaving the poor wretch to his own bitter thoughts.

"Lost! lost! lost! Oh, Nancy, my Nancy! I had almost been better dead!—But what could I do? What could I do? We should both be miserable if I kept my promise to you."

And then he bows his face upon his arms and sobs hoarse and heavy sobs, as before his mind's eye rises the vision of blank and dreary years all spent without her—years in which he may never see her face or hear her voice again.

But never for a moment does he dream of returning to her. He belongs to Lalage now, and Lalage holds him in fetters of gold. It may be even thinks that his grief will be harder to bear than Nancy's, and by-and-by

he will come to think of himself as a very unfortunate creature, not "a scoundrel and a cad!"

He does not see Rochdale before he goes, for which he is devoutly thankful; but in pondering over his own misery, and wondering how Nanoy will receive the news of his treachery, he spends a long and bitter day, and only Lalage is shrewd enough not to comment upon his strange looks and manner.

It is late in the afternoon when Rochdale reaches Ricksworth, and by some strange chance Lillias is on the platform.

She gives a little start, and blushes hotly as her eyes meet his.

"Mr. Rochdale, this is a surprise! And are you quite alone?"

"Yes, quite alone. I resolved last night to run down—I believe you are not ignorant why—but I will not speak now of my own hopes. Lillias, I am the bearer of ill news."

"Of Harry?" she asks, in her anxiety, not noticing that he has called her by her Christian name. "Is he ill?"

"No, it is worse than that. I wish I could break it gently to you—but I can't. Lothian is a scoundrel!"

"Tell me what you mean—hide nothing from me!" Lillias cries, in breathless, almost wordless fear for her darling Nanoy.

"He has sent me to your sister with this message. Listen!"

And word for word he repeats the sentence which is to dash all the life and light from Nanoy's face, to break her heart, and make her cry on death as the best gift Heaven has left for her.

Quite still in the road stands Lillias, anger, scorn, and love raging in her heart, then breaking into a sob she says,—

"Oh! Mr. Rochdale, it will kill her! it will kill her!" And there being no one near he takes her to his breast, to offer her such consolation as he can give; and neither think it strange that their love should be revealed in such a fashion. Neither thinks very much of anyone then save Nanoy, and Lillias reiterates again and again,—

"It will kill her! my poor Nanoy! Oh! if only I were a man, what revenge I would have upon him!"

CHAPTER VII.

"UNLESS he comes to me, and with his own lips confesses his perjury I will not believe it," says the pale, stony faced girl. "You must tell him that; and say that I, who love him, wait hourly and daily for him—that I am dying for one word of hope!" and then she goes out, leaving the newly-acknowledged lovers together, and Lillias weeping, says,—

"Do not try to comfort me. She has got her death-blow!" and remembering the look on the unhappy girl's face he finds no word to say; but for her sake, and because Lillias wishes it, he returns at once to Harry to make one last appeal to his better nature.

The one-time friends meet coldly enough. Harry is looking wretchedly ill, and his manner is reckless. Rochdale is not disposed to spare him—indeed, remembering Nanoy, he is designedly harsh.

But not all his contempt, not all his scathing words can turn Lothian from his purpose.

"I tell you I am pledged; to Lalage," he says. "Our wedding-day is fixed. I can't draw back if I would."

"It would have been more decent to have been off with the old love before arranging a marriage with the new," Rochdale says. "And, at all events, you owe it to Miss Kestevan to show her personally what an irreclaimable blackguard you are. Soorn of you may then help her to forget her ill-starred attachment!"

Much more he says in the same strain, and at last Harry gives a half promise to go down to Ricksworth; but in his cowardice, and his fear of offending Lalage, who is proving herself somewhat exigent, he delays his projected journey day after day.

And Nanoy, like a ghost, wanders through

the garden, where late asters are dying a reluctant death, and all the paths are strewn with moist brown leaves.

"He will come," is her answer to all her sister's or father's words. "He will come, and this dreadful mistake will be explained. I do not doubt him yet!"

So day after day she goes to the gate where his tale of love had been told. Night after night, unknown to the little household, she steals there once more to listen for the sound of a step that never comes, to meet the clasp of a hand that alas! alas! will touch her own but once again, and then be withdrawn for ever!

And at last, when hope is all but dead within that faithful heart, when the short, heavy days are growing shorter, he comes to her.

Through the chill November mist she sees his figure looming, looking unnaturally large and strong, and a great cry of rapture breaks from her parted lips. Surely, he would not come unless to reassure her? And yet, poor child, hope and fear so tear at her heart that she cannot stir a step to meet him. And oh! what an age it seems before he joins her, before that one word, "Nanoy!" breaks upon her listening ear. But the voice that speaks it is hoarse and uncertain; and lifting her eyes to his she reads all the bitter, bitter truth in one swift look. Just a moment those two wild, pallid faces are opposed—in the vague light they look ghostly—then Harry's chin droops upon his breast as he makes his pitiful confession.

"I have come to say good-bye. I am a weak fool and a scoundrel—the unhappiest wretch on earth!"

"Good-bye!" the girl echoes, with no trace of resentment or scorn in her weary voice. "They told me you were faithless, but I did not believe them. I said only from your own lips should you stand condemned. Well, there is nothing more to say—we have made a mistake. It is well we saw it before it was too late to remedy it. Good-bye," and she turns as if to go.

"Nanoy! don't leave me like this! Oh, my little sweetheart, my little, darling sweetheart! There is no one on earth I love like you! Don't you see—don't you guess how I am suffering?"

The heavy eyes bent upon him look with dim wonder into his.

"Do you suffer?" she asks, in the same slow, weary, way. "I am sorry! I thought the pain was all my own, and in a little time you will forget—men always do—and she is lovely!"

"Nanoy, I never shall forget you, I never can; but some day you will see I could not do other than I am doing, and you will forgive, and make some better fellow happy."

She smiles strangely.

"I shall forget, but not this side of the grave."

"Curse me!" he cries, "heap your reproaches upon me. I deserve them all! You can say nothing more bitter than I merit."

"I do not reproach you. I love you still! Good-bye!"

"Oh, stay, Nanoy, darling! Give me one moment longer!" and then he has her in his arms, and is raining kisses upon the small, pale face, which is wet with tears that are not her own. Quite passive she lies in his embrace, save that one slender arm has stolen about his neck, and one white hand lies like a snow-flake on the darkness of his coat.

"You will never doubt that I love you, that I shall love you until I die?" he says, passionately, "that I never shall be glad again, having lost you; but beggars cannot be choosers, and if we had married our poverty might have soured us both. I could not bear to see you changed—aged and worn before your time. Oh, would to Heaven you had never seen me! Would to Heaven you had never loved me!"

Then her voice—how faint and far away it sounds!—answers,—

"We have been so happy, so happy! And, oh, I was blind enough to believe our joy could last; but it is over now. We shall never meet any more. Our old haunts will know us no more; and if I sometimes grow weak and call on you to come, there will be none to answer. Life is very cruel, and death is the only good. When you say 'farewell' to me soon, it will be for ever. Something tells me I shall never see you again, and so—oh, my dear! oh, my dear! let me bless you while I may, let me thank you while I can, for the brief gladness which glorified my life—and then leave me to myself, and the end which comes so soon."

"What do you mean? Let me look at you?" he cries, in keenest anguish. "Oh, Nanoy! oh, Nanoy! are you ill, that you speak so strangely and look so wan? My darling, my darling! would to Heaven I were a better man for your sake."

"Hush!" she says. "Speak quietly now. We are in the presence of death! Dead hopes, dead joys, and a dead love surround us. You did love me once, Harry, not so long ago—when I was prettier and brighter. You will love me again when all these earthly things are passed, and we meet where none can part us."

She looks and speaks so strangely that he is afraid for her.

"Let me take you back to the house?"

"No, no. I must wish you good-bye here; and, Harry, if I should die first you will come and look upon me; and as you look remember I never nursed a harsh thought of you, that I knew your weakness, and forgave it. Now kiss me once and let me go. I am only a woman. I can bear no more."

And when he would have held her she slips from his embrace and disappears amongst the shrubs. Only when he has vainly waited for her return, and at last, in despair of her reappearance, retraced his steps to the station, a slight figure issues from its concealment, and a voice broken with anguish cries aloud,—

"Harry! Harry! oh, come back!" Then there is a momentary silence, after that the sound of hurrying feet, and a woman crying, "Come quickly! Oh, father! oh, Chummy! She is dead!"

No, not dead; but a tiny stream of blood is issuing from the poor, pale lips.

"She has broken a blood-vessel," her father says, with stony calmness. "Chummy, fetch Brownlow here at once. Lillias, stop crying. I want your help."

"If you would see Nanoy alive, come at once." This is the message that reaches Harry at the conclusion of his wedding tour; and heedless of his bride's remonstrances he prepares for the long and wearisome journey.

For days after that last meeting Nanoy had lain between life and death; and just when those who loved her hoped that she had taken a favourable turn there came the news of Harry's marriage.

She laughed aloud as she heard—one strange, hysterical laugh—and then Lillias saw with horror that bright crimson stain once more upon the white chin and throat, and knew the worst had come.

On a wild night a wild-faced man rushes down the road leading to Kestevan Hall; at the gate he pauses, gasping for breath.

"Heaven grant I am not too late!" he groans, and leaning there fights hard for courage and composure.

Not a light is visible, but he knows every step of the uneven way, and presently hurries on again like a madman.

Chummy opens the door to him.

"How is she? Tell me she is not dead!"

"Take me to her!" he gasps.

"Come," says the old man, grimly, "she is waiting for you," and in silence he leads the way to Nanoy's room.

As they enter Mr. Kestevan passes them without a word, but Harry sees his face is white and drawn with a strong man's anguish.

His eyes fall first on Lillias, who is weeping wildly upon her lover's shoulder, then they travel to the snowy bed. What burden does it bear that it should lie so rigid and so silent?

With one awful sound, which is neither a shriek nor a groan, he springs forward, and flinging himself upon his knees, cries,—

"Too late! too late! Nancy, Nancy, I have murdered you. I who loved you so! Ah, dear Heaven, speak to me—speak to me, it only to say you forgive! I never knew—I never guessed, how it was with you."

Then Lillias speaks in a hard and measured voice.—

"You should not mourn for her now that she is at rest, beyond the reach of your cruelty and falsehood. Yesterday she was not beyond all appeal—not beyond what poor comfort you might have given. Oh, my sister! oh, my sister! Why must you love a thing so low?" and then, as she breaks down, and turns aside, Harry cries,—

"I deserve all and more than you can say; but you are a woman, and women are merciful. Have pity on me now. The knowledge of my sin will blight my whole life, and crush me to the earth. Lillias, did she say one word of me at the last?"

"She forgave you."

"And for her sake, you will try and do the same?"

"I am a woman, not an angel. One thing more I have to tell you. She begged that when you came you might be left alone with her. If you have no fear of the dead we will leave you now."

He makes no reply—he simply cannot; but when the door has closed upon them he casts himself beside that silent, unresponsive form, crying on her with every passionate, endearing word to speak to him, and, when no answer comes, he prays wildly for death. But he is young and strong, and there are years of life before him.

When at last he leaves that silent chamber he has aged many years, and he knows never any more will he recover his old gaiety, his love of life, and its pleasures. Unattended he reaches the hall, to find Chummy waiting for him.

"So you're going," the old man says, in a terse tone. "I wish to Heaven you had never shown your accursed face here. She was so bright—so bright until you crossed her path. And I watched her fading, fading, and I could not save her, though I would have died to do it. As I watched I cursed you, and sure Heaven will hear my curse, and bring home your guilt to you. You murdered her! you murdered her, I say—the sweetest, dearest, loveliest young lady on earth."

"Hush!" Harry says, hoarsely. "Already my grief and remorse are more than I can bear."

"May they grow greater each day you live," and he lifts his feeble arm, as though to strike him down, but letting it drop to his side, mutters, "no, no, I leave you to the vengeance of one mightier than I. He will repay," and so, with a strangled sob, turns away.

And Harry goes back into the black night, fit symbol of what his life henceforth must be. Years after he will meet Lillias, a happy wife and mother; and even she, looking on his worn face, will acknowledge that his suffering has been great as his sin, and remembering how fully Nancy forgave him, herself will forgive.

Under the grasses she sleeps peacefully, recking nothing of all that come and go; and just removed from her grave is another—Chummy's. The old man never recovered the shock of his favourite's death, and did not long survive her.

Mr. Kestevan, bent and feeble, finds solace in his sole surviving daughter and her children, and in the renewed glory of Kestevan Hall; for Nancy's dream has been fulfilled, only the Prince Charming, who has restored its splendour, is her sister's husband, and not the lover she had conjured for herself!

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

SAINTS are not made in a day, but sinners can be made in a moment.

THE charity that begins at home and ends at home is weak in the legs.

NO one sees more of the seamy side of life than the poor dressmaker.

THERE is no moving a dude. He is a standing joke.

RAW zeornits are like butter; A warm fire puts them on the run.

"WHAT, smoking again?" "Yes." "What's become of the new leaf turned over?" "I guess I must have torn it out to light this cigar."

TEACHER: "You say there are six senses? Why, I have only five." Scholar: "I know it, sir. The sixth one is common sense."

LOVERS are so light-hearted they can read each other's thoughts with the gas turned very low.

REV. MR. PRIMROSE: "So your wife is going away on a visit. Fond of change, I see." BROWN: "You would think so if you saw her going through my pockets every night."

"SHOOTER seems to be very much interested in labour agitation." "Yes; I don't know of anything that seems to agitate him more than the mere thought of labour."

A LITTLE girl, in order to prove that it is wrong to cut off the tails of horses and dogs, quoted the scriptural injunction, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

"WHAT is the first lesson in journalism?" asks a young man. It is this: "When you go into the office of an editor, make your visit short."

WIFE: "Do you believe coal-dealers go to Heaven when they die?" Husband (a minister): "No, my dear; not unless they repent of their weight."

SMALL BOY: "Ma, doolergymen ever strike?" Mother: "They do, my son. When they are offered another place with a larger salary they immediately strike out for that place."

"ANYTHING new on foot?" asked one politician of another. "Yes," was the reply. "What is it?" "Our baby. He's just learned to walk."

TEACHER: "Johnnie, you must bring an excuse for being absent yesterday from the head of your family." Johnnie: "She's away, ma'am; I'll have to get it from my father."

WILKINS: "How about that bill you undertook to collect on shares?" Lawyer: "You said I could have half of it, didn't you?" "Certainly." "Well, I've collected my half. Can't get yours."

FIRST MAN: "What do you think of Jones? I heard this morning that he actually owes for the wig he wears!" Second Man: "That's what you might call a hair-owing case, isn't it?"

SOMETHING REALISTIC.—Book Agent (entering): "Madam, I have a work of art to show you. It is a book." Lady of the House (opening the door): "And I have a work of art to show you. It is a landscape."

"PEHAW," said a Mayfair lady to her husband who had been criticising her attire, "what does a man know about a woman's clothes?" "He knows the price, my dear," he replied gently, and she retired.

GENTLEMAN: "You are a cheat! The picture you sold me yesterday has painted upon it 'Original—by Rembrandt.' It has just been proved to me that it is only a copy." Dealer: "The signature was perfectly correct. The original is by Rembrandt."

MRS. WILGUS: "I learn that your daughter has decided to enter a convent and devote herself to the Lord." Mrs. BIGGS: "She did intend to, but her former lover, Mr. Saphead, suddenly returned last night, and she has decided to enter his home, and devote herself to him."

"You can say what you choose about Mr. Parvenu, but I think he is a man of the finest polish." "Well, he ought to be. He spent the first fifteen years of his life blacking boots."

A BRIGHT little girl, who had successfully spelled the word "that," was asked by her teacher what would remain after the "t" had been taken away. "The dirty cups and saucers," was the prompt reply.

SHE: "And what have you ever done to prove your love to me?" HE: "Dove! Why, I have done without my lunch every day for a week in order to take you to the opera last night!"

STYLE IN VEHICLES.—Dealer: "I am sure, madam, you could look the city through and not find a handsomer carriage than this." Mrs. D'AVONCO: "Oh it's handsome enough, but it looks too comfortable to be stylish."

YOU say that all dreams are due to something influencing the sleeper at that particular moment. How do you account for my dreaming the other night that I was dead?" "Probably your room was too hot."

DR. PILLSBURY: "Well, Mr. Sceptic, did you follow my prescription?" Sceptic: "No. If I had I would have broken my neck." Dr. Pillsbury: "Why, what do you mean?" Sceptic: "I threw the prescription out of the window."

"But before I can admit of your paying your addresses to my daughter," said the father, "I must know the extent of your debts. Come, now, tell me what you owe?" "In that case, sir," said the suitor, "will you kindly permit me to take a chair?"

OVERHEARD at hotel in Calais.—American lady just arrived, and having lost all her luggage, turns to a gentleman near her, and remarks: "You know it is not the direct blows of Providence I mind, but these collateral slaps."

LADY LECTURER ON WOMAN'S RIGHTS (waxing warm): "Where would man be if it had not been for woman?" (After a pause, and looking around the hall): "I repeat, where would man be if it had not been for woman?" Voice from the Gallery: "In Paradise, ma'am."

MR. CHEAPSIDE: "I thought you said you were going to Mrs. Brick's five o'clock tea this afternoon. It's after five now." Mrs. Cheapside: "There's no hurry. Her five o'clock tea isn't likely to be ready before seven. She's got the girl I used to have."

DAISY LUGGOS: "Why, bless me, Amy, what new fad is this? Your sleeves are rolled up, and you're covered with flour!" Amy Hamonog: "Oddest fad in the world, my dear; I've taken a notion to help my mother in the kitchen!"

ETHEL: "Oh, at last! It has been years, Alphonse, since I saw you." Alphonse: "Oh, my own Ethel, it has been centuries." Ethel's father (up in the library): "Maggie, who was that you just let in?" Maggie: "It was Mr. Cumlotts, sir." Ethel's father: "Great guns, this is the ninth time he's been here this week. He might as well live here."

THE COUNTRY HOUSE. (What our architect has to put up with).—Fair Client: "I want it to be nice and baronial, Queen Anne and Elizabethan, and all that—kind of quaint and Nuremberg, you know—regular Old English, with French windows opening to the lawn, and Venetian blinds, and sort of Swiss balconies, and a loggia. But I'm sure you know what I mean!"

YASLEWY: "See here, Wickwire, you are a married man, and ought to know something about the ways of women. I want to ask your opinion on a little matter." Wickwire: "Well?" "I was calling on a young lady last evening—no, I didn't say what her name was—and along about 11.30 she began asking me about my favourite breakfast dishes. I'd like to know whether she was hinting towards housekeeping, or intimating that it was time for me to go home."

SOCIETY.

LADY SALISBURY has returned to Arlington-street quite recovered from her bronchitis, and intends to remain in England for the present.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL is going to try his luck at exploration in South Africa, and he is starting, so rumour says, in the middle of April for Bechuanaland.

THERE are rumours of an engagement between the Czarevitch and Princess Margaret, sister of William II. of Germany.

WATERED-SILK for the sleeves and panels of cloth gowns is still used in Paris, and is especially suitable for women of large figure.

THE death of Lord Albemarle reduces the number of Waterloo officers who are still living to two, namely, General George Whichcote and Colonel William Hewitt.

THE present preference for the modes that appertain to the Louis XIV., XV., and XVI. periods is clearly evinced in the style of the new cottons. They are all most elaborately printed in floral designs of great beauty.

At the head-quarters of the Lady Guides there are reception-rooms supplied with newspapers and writing materials, dressing-rooms, private rooms in which to interview servants, and a modest restaurant.

COIFFURES could hardly be plainer than they are at present, and even for grand occasions the aim is to keep all ornament in close neighbourhood to the head, instead of its mounting on high or standing out sideways.

THE Queen of Denmark is a fine pianist, and her daughter, the Czarina, is nearly as good. At the Danish Court chamber music is a daily occupation, generally a quartette with the Queen at the piano. Beethoven and Brahms are the favourite composers.

A DIRECT descendant of Joan Hart, Shakespeare's sister, has recently died in England. She was a Mrs. Fletcher, and pursued gun-making as a trade. In this business she was extremely successful. Her chief pride was in the possession of Shakespeare's jug and stick.

NELLIE FARJEON, the nine-year-old daughter of the English novelist and his American wife, who was a daughter of the actor, Joe Jefferson, is said to show remarkable ability as a composer of music. It is not an uncommon thing for the little girl to sit down at the piano and improvise a song, both words and music. Her father is editing a book of her compositions.

THE ex-Empress Eugénie is staying at San Remo, where her tall, elegant figure and careworn face attract no little attention. She has lost all traces of that beauty which used to make her the envy of her sex; there is now something almost terrible in the tragic sadness of her expression. Nothing could be more simple than her dress, though she still wears it with a truly Imperial grace.

THE Emperor William's vagaries become more eccentric, and his abrupt restlessness, accesses of irritability, and uncertain moods occasion much solicitude. His medical advisers have urged him with great emphasis to restrict himself in the use of tobacco, if he has not self-control to abandon it altogether. He disregards their counsel, and continues his custom of smoking a dozen big strong cigars every day.

THE latest novelties in foot wear are those made of lace, unlined so as to reveal glimpses of silken hose through the meshes. The meshes of the lace are gold or silver thread, and its pattern is traced with strong gold or silver cord. The high, pointed heels are, of course, finished in imitation of the metallic thread used in the lace. They are designed for the use of brides and bridesmaids, and are to be worn over white or cream silk hose.

STATISTICS.

ONLY 9 per cent. of those engaged in war are killed on the field of battle.

THE annual production of coal in the United States is 180,000,000 tons.

IN 1789 there were 1,329 streets in Paris, while in 1890 the number has increased to 3,694 streets.

LAST year Germany produced 5,232,073,000 quarts of beer, or over 106 quarts for each of its population.

IN 1890 our importation of eggs represented a sum of over £3,000,000 sterling. While France and Germany between them sent us over 714,000,000 of eggs, we received more than 200,000,000 from Belgium, and nearly 75,000,000 from Russia. From Portugal came 2,000,000, and smaller quantities from Norway and Sweden, Morocco, Italy, Turkey, and Egypt. Malta and the Channel Islands also contributed, as even Australia has begun to do, notwithstanding that the eggs from thence must be at least six weeks' old before they are put on the English markets.

GEMS.

TASTE depends upon those finer emotions which make the organisation of the soul.

SLEEP, riches, and health are only truly enjoyed after they have been interrupted.

WITH all our efforts, few of us succeed in deceiving others so completely as we succeed, without effort, in deceiving ourselves.

IT is one of the maxims of Francis de Sales—and good men and women in all lands might well adopt it as their motto—that "a judicious silence is always better than truth spoken without charity."

A SINGLE surface scratch may in time cause bells of the largest size and most exquisite tone to crack. And a single playful word, distorted and misreported by a caustic and bitter tongue, may injure the delicate rapport of the noblest and most generous friendships.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BRIOCHE BUNS.—Take 1 lb. flour and 1 oz. German yeast, and set to rise with a little warm water. Put a teaspoonful of milk, and 1 lb. of butter into a stewpan, and, when just beginning to warm, add four well-whisked eggs, and make into a batter with the yeast and flour. Let it stand in a warm place for an hour, and then add a little caster sugar. Mould the mixture into buns, and wash the tops with beaten egg. Bake in a quick oven.

SUGARED NUTS.—Put 1 lb. of thoroughly ripe nuts and 1 lb. of sugar in a stewpan with half a pint of water. Boil over a clear fire till the nuts show signs of cracking in halves; then drain them, and leave on the rack till thoroughly dry. Then sift all the sugar from them through a wire sieve; put this back into the pan, with two tablespoonfuls of water and enough cochineal to give a pretty pink colour. Boil it up, put the nuts in, and keep stirring over the fire till they are dry and crystallised. Then store in dry bottles.

SALT BISCUITS.—Mix 1 lb. of the finest flour with a heaped teaspoonful of salt, and rub it with 1/2 oz. of butter until perfectly smooth; put a gill and a half of tepid milk and water into a basin, mix with it 1 oz. of German yeast and the flour mixture. Then make it into a light dough, put it into a covered basin in a sufficiently warm place to rise for an hour and a quarter. Roll it into thin fingers, brush them over with milk, and sprinkle with rough salt. Bake from one and a half to one and three-quarter hours on a carefully floured baking-tin. These biscuits should be perfectly crisp if properly cooked.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE oil of the sturgeon makes a superior dressing for leather.

FOURTEEN shillings was the yearly wage of a boy in Queen Elizabeth's time.

EXTREME heat is more fatal to human life than extreme cold.

RAIN falls more frequently between 3 A.M. and 8 A.M. than at any time during the day.

CONSTANTINOPLE is believed to have founded the first hospital in the world, as the institution is now understood.

To the long catalogue of street nuisances must be added an entirely new horror in the shape of recitation.

PREVIOUS to the time of Elizabeth the only article to assist in eating was the jackknife, which also served for sundry other purposes.

A STATIONER is so called because at one time he exhibited his wares (quills, ink, parchment, etc.) at a stall or "station" in the market-place or street corner.

THE "Angelus" was sold by its painter for £72; gained something each time it changed owners, and having been sold about a dozen times, was last purchased by M. Chaudard for £30,000.

THE necessary, if not altogether harmless, pin is being automatically supplied on the other side of the Atlantic, and will shortly be obtainable at London railway stations and elsewhere.

TWO hundred thousand dollars a year are spent by the London School Board in enforcing the attendance of children. They are advised to try the French plan of getting children to school by good lunches.

CIGARS that are ignited by rubbing against a rough surface, like a match, are the invention of a St. Petersburg druggist. The ends are merely troched with some harmless and inodorous, but exceedingly inflammable preparation.

SHOULD you have become soured on this cold world and desire to get away from the sight of man, there are no less than 470 islands in the Indian Ocean to which you can retire and become the only living inhabitant and monarch of all you survey.

THE poet Southey mentions that in days gone by the Mayors of Leicester used to be chosen by a sow. The candidates sat in a semicircle, each with his hat full of beans in his lap, and he was elected mayor from whose hat the sow ate first.

WE have no parental claim on electric discovery, for in the twelfth century the scientific priests of Etruria drew lightning from the clouds, antedating Franklin, and by means of an iron rod on the shores of the Adriatic Sea the signal service electrician of ancient days released the electric spark by means of the coming storm.

NOW that we are likely to have many a gusty day some of our members may like to make a novel experiment, no less a one than seeing the wind. It can be made with a polished metal surface of about two feet or more in length, such as a large hand-saw. To try the experiment, take a windy day, no matter whether it be hot or cold, cloudy or clear. In fact, the results are fully as good as if the sun is obscured; but it must not be rainy or murky weather. Hold the saw or other metallic surface at right angles to the direction of the wind—i.e., if the wind is north hold your surface east and west—but instead of holding it vertically, incline it about forty-two degrees to the horizon, so that the wind striking it glances and flows over the edge, as the water flows over a dam. Now sight carefully along the edge some minutes at a sharply defined object, and you will see the wind pouring over the edge of the saw in graceful curves. Make your observations carefully, and you will hardly ever fail in the experiment.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITTLE NELL.—Hartshorn usually restores colours that have been taken out by acids of any kind.

LITTLE WIFE.—Japanned ware should not be washed with very hot water, as it will cause it to crack.

MYSTERY.—Do not think so. Never heard of the like occurring, but life is made up of accidents and surprises.

THE CLAIMANT.—The first trial in the Tishborne case commenced on May 11, 1871.

PEWEE.—A baker is legally required to weigh bread on delivery if the customer asks him to do so.

ROGER.—Apply to the Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon-row, Westminster.

INQUIRER.—Birmingham was made a city by Royal Charter, dated January 14, 1699.

BAKRUPE.—A man who is insolvent cannot make a legal deed of gift of property in his possession.

ROVER.—A dog sent from Australia to England would be detained at the port of destination only under special circumstances.

A TRAVELLER.—1. The greatest distance covered by a steamer in twenty-four hours was by the *City of Paris*, 515 miles. 2. Same as land.

ANXIETY.—The parents of a child who has been adopted can, under existing law, reclaim custody of the child at any time.

HOUSEWIFE.—Yellow soap and whiting mixed to a thick paste with a little water will stop a leak as effectually as will solder.

EXPERIMENT.—A substitute for cream is made by pouring weak tea upon a beaten egg gradually, stirring it all the time to keep it from curdling.

LEONORA.—It is said that to drink sweet milk after onions will purify the breath so that no other odour will remain. A cupful of strong coffee is also recommended.

NAP.—The late Emperor Napoleon III., then Prince Louis, acted as a special constable in the London Chartist riots in 1848.

A SUBSCRIBER.—You cannot now register a trade-name or mark, which is used by another person, although you may have been the first to use it.

OLD LORAIN.—There is a Privy Council for England and one for Ireland. They are separate bodies. Their duties are various. A history of the office would take up too much of the space at our command.

DOUBTFUL.—We cannot give you the information you require. It is rather out of our line. But you will most likely get it at the office of the Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster.

JACK.—A corvette is a sloop-of-war, of not more than twenty guns, and ranks next below a frigate. The word is French, and signifies "a leap," and is akin to our English word "coursier."

S. T. A.—The army estimates for 1890-91 were for 606,048 men of all branches, including those on Indian establishment. The navy estimates were for 54,918 seamen and 15,882 marines.

V. C.—The Victoria Cross is given only for acts of bravery in the field. It is given without distinction of rank; but when obtained by private soldiers it carries a small pension with it.

JEWELS.—It is not illegal to melt gold coins for the purposes of making jewellery; but it is illegal in any way to deface such coins, or to chip them, or to reduce their weight by any process.

CHARLIE'S LOVE.—1. The stripes, according to the way in which they are placed, may indicate good conduct, or that the man is a sergeant. 2. The letters O. B., as described, indicate "Coast Brigade."

DISTRESSED WIDOW.—If a man dies without a will, and leaves no children, his widow takes the whole estate if it does not exceed £500 in value; if it is over £500, then she takes £500, and half the remainder.

R. F. B.—If your letters are misdelivered you can complain at the Post Office. It is a question if either firm is entitled to exclusive use of trade-name mentioned.

SAPPHO.—We do not remember to have met with the poem you describe; but we will try to find out the name of the author, and if we succeed will tell you in a later issue.

"CITY OF PARIS."—On the steamship *City of Paris* there are sixty firemen. Fifty coal-passers shovel the fuel from the bunkers to the furnace doors, and the firemen toss it in. They receive £4 a month and their board. The coal-passers are paid £3 5s. a month.

HYPATIA.—"English" and "foreign" glass are comparable terms, but you cannot properly compare "English" glass and "fancy" glass. The sentence is correct as it stands.

GYMNASIUM.—You must select dumb-bells suited to your age and strength. Age does not regulate the selection, but the frommenger with whom you deal may be safely expected to assist you.

A SURFERER.—We can do nothing with cases like yours, beyond recommending that the medical practitioner of highest repute in the district should be consulted. All cases are alike to the medical man. They are just cases, or bits of work to be done, and excite no feeling beyond the ordinary professional one of what is the best thing to be done at the outset.

ANNOYANCE.—There is no fixed distance within which trees must be planted from a boundary; but your neighbour has no right to plant them that their roots penetrate your ground.

E. M. B.—A master is not obliged to pay wages during a man's absence through illness, whether caused by accident or otherwise. As to the notice in the case stated we cannot advise you.

IGNORANT TENANT.—The property-tax is a landlord's tax, but must be paid in the first instance by the tenant, who is entitled to deduct it from the rent next payable.

FOND PARENT.—We think the superstition that a child's "cud" ensures its possessor against death by drowning is now dead, and that the article will find a purchaser, if at all, only in the curiosity hunter.

JUBILEE.—We are not aware that any value whatever attaches to jubilee envelopes. They are not in demand anywhere. Fifty years hence they may sell well on account of their age and rarity.

"HOMI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE."—The crest is the dutiable thing. Many have no accompanying mottoes. Duty, 12s. yearly; fine for neglect anything up to treble duty.

VALEUDINARIAN.—One hour in the open air, one dose daily, is a better prescription than half the suffocators get who have colds or the winter languor from breathing too much heated, indoor air.

THE LITTLE HERO.—You must find, or address, the shore steward of the line or company; all appointments are made through him. Not much experience if you are a likely fellow.

ORIENT.—There are half-a-dozen Orientals afloat, and except you can give us the captain's name or say where the one you are in search of sailed to, we are afraid we cannot help you. Any of the harbour-masters can give the information you desire.

WHEN MOTHER IS ILL.

"What should we do if mother were dead?"
That's the refrain that comes into my head;
For everything's wrong, and the house is so still,
And at sixes and sevens, now mother is ill.

Serious? No. But, then, don't you see,
Though not so for her, yet it is so for me;
For I've to be mother, and daughter, and maid,
And there's hardly enough for the three, I'm afraid.

It really is trying—the butcher's so slow;
He won't send the meat up in time, don't you know;
So the cook's out of temper from morning till night,
And declares there is nothing I order that's right.

Yet I work like a slave—ah, you laugh, but I do—
I pour out the coffee at breakfast for two,
Then I order the dinner, as mother was wont,
For I know how to cook—though the cook says I don't.

Then—out of my way—there's her bell—don't you hear?
And she wants me to take up her cocoa, poor dear;
Can't stop to shake hands—you must come again soon;
Shut the door very quietly—good-afternoon!

J. T. B. W.

A LOVER OF THE SEA.—About 20 years is the average age. Wages much the same as for domestic service on shore. You must address "The Manager" at the office of the company. See advertisements of shipping lines. No books published on the subject.

A BROKEN HEART.—No length of desertion dissolves a marriage. If you marry, after seven years' desertion, having reason to believe your husband to be dead, the law will not punish you for bigamy; but you are still the first man's wife.

WANDERING JEW.—The climate of Venezuela is trying, but the people are worse than the climate. The place is in continuous turmoil, always in a state of civil war, with no sense of security either for life or property in it from one year's end to the other. Don't go there.

PUBLICAN.—1. Debts for beer consumed on the premises cannot be recovered. 2. Proceedings could be taken in the county court in the ordinary way. 3. A publican can refuse to supply any customer without any reason for his refusal.

DISTRESSED FATHER.—Your son would be enlisted as a "boy," we presume. If so, you might get him off by writing to his commanding officer. But if he really looks full age, and enlisted as such, the authorities claim the right to keep him, notwithstanding his youth.

SEEKING AFTER KNOWLEDGE.—The longest verse in the Bible is the 9th verse of the 5th chapter of Esther; the shortest, the 35th verse of the 11th chapter of St. John. The Bible contains 3,566,490 letters, 773,746 words, 31,173 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 63 books.

ENGINEER.—Flying machines have frequently been tried, notably by a Mr. Simmonds, at Uxham, in December, 1875; in this case the machine fell twice. In August, 1883, a Mr. Lindfield tried a steam flying machine at West Drayton.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—You must send to the adjutant at the depot of your son's regiment 20s. if he is enlisted as a common militiaman, or 50s. if he is enlisted for the reserve, and request that he will be good enough to forward the young man's discharge. The letter must be sent by the young man himself though not by you. He is a free agent.

NEWLY-MARRIED.—The hiring of a domestic servant is usually by the month, and a month's notice or equivalent wages is required on either side. If the first month is "on trial," the agreement terminates at the end of the month, unless renewed.

CACABIANNA.—The coronet of the Prince of Wales of England was formerly a circle of gold, with four cross-pieces on the edge between as many flours de lis; but since the Restoration it has been closed with one arch, adorned with pearls, and surmounted by a mound and cross.

SYLVIA.—Intellectual effort in the early years of life is very injurious. All labour of mind required of children before the seventh year is in opposition to the laws of nature, and will prove injurious to the physical organisation, and prevent its proper and mature development.

NAIRY.—There is a steamer named *Nairy* which sailed from London on December 5 for Yokohama, Japan, and will be there next week perhaps. There is no ship so named; but the ship *Harold* sailed from London on September 3 for Melbourne, where she is now.

A DELICATE ROSEBUD.—There is the greatest danger from using mineral or metallic preparations upon the skin. Instead of using soap on your face, wash it frequently in buttermilk, or in oatmeal gruel, that is, stirring oatmeal into warm water, and straining off the water to be applied to the face.

TWO JANE.—Jane and Janet are both French, the latter the diminutive of the former, though now ranking with us as a distinct name. Jessie is an English nondescript; Jane is the feminine of John; and Janet, Janette, or Jeannette, little Jane, is, as we have said, the diminutive of Jane.

MANAGER.—Barry gets a small fee from the London Sheriffs, which gives them the first call on his services; that is to say, if there are two persons to be hanged on the same day, one in London and one elsewhere, the Sheriffs can insist on Barry doing their job, let who may do the other. He is not "public executioner" for any place.

STUDENT.—It does not now seem probable that the Greeks will ever again attain their old pre-eminence among the nations of the earth; but, of course, it is not worth while to speculate on such a problem, and it would be scarcely practical for anyone to attempt to predict what will be the future course and degree of development among the nations of the earth.

INDIGNATION.—We think that your parents acted justifiably in preventing your marriage. A boy of twenty would be almost certain to make a fool of himself in such a case. It will be time enough for you to think of marrying half-a-dozen years hence. Shakespeare, who is considered good authority on almost every question, says:—

"A young man married is a young man married."

PROPRIETY.—It may be "perfectly proper for a young lady to visit the parents of a young man to whom she is engaged," and it might be highly improper for her to do so. The propriety or impropriety of her visit would depend on all the circumstances of the case. A young lady should be careful not to be too free in such visits, and she should never make them in a manner, nor under circumstances, which would suggest or raise the question of propriety.

VICTOR.—The family name of the Czar of Russia is Romanoff. The Hohenzollerns are the ruling family in Prussia and the German Empire; and the Hapsburgs are the ruling family in the empire of Austria. As far as Queen Victoria may be said to have a family name, it is Gough. The proper family name of the King of Sweden is Bernadotte, as he is a descendant of the French marshal, Bernadotte, of the Napoleonic time, who was elected crown prince of Sweden in 1810, and subsequently succeeded to the throne.

J. M.—Etching is a kind of engraving done partly with tools and partly by means of an acid. A copper plate is varnished over with a thin film or coat of wax and asphaltum. When it is dry, the etcher makes his drawing on it with etching needles or points, which are simply needles of different sizes set into handles, cutting all the lines, through the wax varnish down to the copper. After this is finished a little rim of wax is built up all around the edge of the plate, and weak nitric acid mixed with water is poured over the face of the drawing. The acid eats into the copper wherever it is laid bare by the lines of the drawing, but does not eat the parts covered by the varnish. In about a quarter-of-an-hour the acid is poured off and the plate cleaned, the varnish being melted off. The plate is then ready to be printed from like any other plate engraving.

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